Sir Rabindranath Tagore

His Life Personality and Genius

BY

K. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI

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HIS LIFE, PERSONALITY AND GENIUS

BY

K. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI, B.A., B.L.

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FOREWORD.

Mr. Ramaswami Sastri's book meets a need so general that there is little need of a "foreword." Upon the publication of *Gitanjali*, Rabindranath was immediately acclaimed in England, and *The Gardener*, with its more secular loveliness, probably won a wider public. But the tone of the one as of the other was strange to English readers, and few even of those most deeply moved by this poetry did not desire an interpreter. For the full understanding of Rabindranath's work, very much more is needed than the poems themselves. Such biographical information as has already been given in part by Mr. Ernest Rhys is quite necessary; but the great need is that we should be enabled to identify ourselves with the poet and cease to find strangeness in his ways of emotion and of speech and particularly in his symbolism. This is not easy for the average reader, whether he be westerner or Indian. We need the service of one whose mind bears kinship with that of the poet, and who can interpret his works from within. One doubts whether

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it is possible for an English critic to perform this service. The consciously nurtured spirituality and the peculiar symbolism (to name two matters only) of the lyrics are foreign to our own poetry. The plays can scarcely be said to belong to drama as we conceive it. Their symbolism, besides distracting attention from concrete character and action, produces, in *The King of the Dark Chamber* particularly, an obscurity that might seem fatal to drama. Already, in several published articles, Mr. Ramaswami Sastri has given vital help towards the understanding of Rabindranath and his religious, lyrical and dramatic conceptions, and now he has given us a comprehensive study that is likely to be invaluable. For, this poet is undoubtedly the noblest of those who, in our time, have found utterance in English—the clearest of vision, the most sublime in thought and in speech, while at the same time rooted and grounded in the love of all the loveliness of earth.

MADRAS,
May 1916. J. C. ROLLO.

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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION.

I am sending this book into the wide world fully alive to its many imperfections. To interpret to the world, Sir Rabindranath Tagore's genius adequately we must have a critic who is at the same time a great poet, a passionate lover of India and India's immemorial spiritual ideals, a practical humanitarian whose interests are as varied as life and in whose heart love for humanity forms with love of motherland and love of God the holy trinity—which at the same time is a unity—of his heart's adoration, and a saint who has soared on the wings of love and wisdom to the very Throne of Grace.

I have further laboured under the great disadvantage of not knowing the great Bengali language in which Tagore's greatest works are written. I have resolved to learn it at least for having the joy of reading his works in the original. I have, however, laboured hard to collect and group and systematise all the numerous translations of his songs, poems, stories, and essays that have appeared in various magazines and reviews from time to time. I shall feel obliged and grateful to any one who vouchsafes supplementary information to me on this matter. I have appended a

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of this work. I thank also the editors of the *Vedanta Kesari*, the *Madras Fortnightly*, and the *Literary Journal* for allowing me to use my articles on Tagore published in these journals, though as a matter of fact this book proceeds on new and original lines altogether.

India is yet the true home of beauty and romance, and the infinite artistic and spiritual riches lying neglected in our books and folklore and life require the work of many men of genius of the type of Tagore to reveal them in the fulness of their radiance to the world. I shall deem it the highest reward for my work if I get the blessings of my countrymen and of all lovers of India to enable me to take a part, however humble it may be, in the great and holy work of revealing the Soul of India to the world.

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SIR RABINDRANATH TAGORE : HIS LIFE, PERSONALITY AND GENIUS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

I. Proem.

Miss Evelyn Underhill says in her admirable Introduction to the Autobiography of Sir Rabindranath Tagore s father Maharshi Devendranath Tagore: " As the poems of Rabindranath Tagore are examples unique in our time, rare in any time, of this synthetic mysticism, a whole and balanced attitude to the infinite and intimate, transcendent and immanent, reality of God, as they speak to us out of life itself, yet not out of the thin and restless plane of existence which we call by that august name ; so that same depth and richness of view, which escapes alike extreme absolutism and extreme immanentism, which embraces the universal without ever losing touch with the personal, is found to be the governing intuition of his father's life." In his recent book on Rabindranath Tagore, Mr. Ernest Rhys says : "On one occasion in London, after the reading of the poet's play *Chitra*, Mr. Montagu, the Under Secretary of State for India, described how, when riding through an Indian forest

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at night, he came upon a clearing where two or three men sat round a fire. Not being certain of his road, he was glad to dismount and rest his tired horse. Shortly after he had joined the group, a poor-looking, ill-clothed lad came out of the forest and sat down also at the fire. First one of the men sang a song and then another. The boy's turn came, and he sang a song more beautiful both in words and music than the rest. When asked who had made the song, he said that he did not know; 'they were singing these songs everywhere.' A while after, Mr. Montagu heard the words and music again, this time in a very different place, and when he asked for the name of the maker of the song he heard for the first time the name of Rabindranath Tagore."

II. Father and Son.

I have given these two quotations as an introduction to this study, because they show the unique qualities of Tagore's genius and reveal further the source of some of the highest spiritual elements of his art. No sketch of his life and works can be complete without a preliminary study of the life and spiritual attainment of his father, the renowned Maharshi Devendranath Tagore. It was from his father that the poet got his unique spiritual vision, his sympathetic outlook on life, his love for the poor, his burning patriotism, his love of solitude and meditation, his quiet humour, his knowledge of men and things, and his fine artistic sense and vigilance—

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though in the purely poetic qualities he outshines his father in the splendour of his gifts. Evelyn Underhill well points out in her admirable Introduction to the Maharshi's Autobiography the spotless purity and spiritual intuitions of the Maharshi's nature—his mystical genius, his flaming vision, his enraptured heart, his passion for poverty, his hatred of possessions and all unreal objects of desire, "the perpetual effort to actualise the infinite within the finite, to make of life a valid sacrament in which, so far as human nature may accomplish it, a perpetually developing outward sign shall go step by step with the perpetually developing inward grace." His "first fine careless rapture" of mystical vision was accompanied by mental searchings and travail and "rigorous moral efforts and re-adjustments." "It is the rhythm of detachment, says Kabir, which beats time to the music of love." The Maharshi's inspiration came from the Upanishads which, in the words of Evelyn Underhill, "crystallising intuitions long growing beneath the surface, resolving the disharmonies of his thought and feeling, and pointing the way to peace, seemed to him "like a divine voice descending from heaven." We see in him "that tendency to involuntary dramatisation frequently present in genius of this kind, which so commonly presents its intuitions to the surface mind in a pictorial, musical, or allegorical form." (Evelyn Underhill's Introduction to the Autobiography of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, page xxvi).

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Evelyn Underhill says in regard to his love of seclusion and solitary meditation : " At some period of their lives the great contemplatives seem always to need such a time of 'lonely dwelling' with its wide spaces of silence, its direct communion with Nature and God. Then as Rolle the Hermit has it : 'In the wilderness the Beloved may speak to the heart of the lover, as it were a bashful lover that his sweetheart before men entreats not."

Thus I have laid stress first on this aspect of the Maharshi's genius, as we find in the poet this synthetic mysticism and this " supreme unitive vision of God, as at once transcendent and immanent, personal and cosmic, the Inward, the Outward, the First and the Last," in combination with high poetic qualities. Devendranath Tagore himself describes in many places in his Autobiography his unique spiritual experiences. He describes thus his first experience : " I was as if no longer the same man. A strong aversion to wealth arose within me. The coarse bamboo-mat on which I sat seemed to be my fitting seat, carpets and costly spreadings seemed hateful, in my mind was awakened a joy unfelt before. I was then eighteen years old." (Page 38 of his *Autobiography*). He records also a unique experience of his later life : " With thrilling heart I saw the eyes of God within that forest. Those eyes were my guide in this difficult path............. This gaze of His has become rooted indelibly in my heart.

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Whenever I fall into trouble, I see those eyes of His" (Page 260).

The Maharshi had an apostolic nature and a genius for organisation and preaching. In his son these moods have been softened by golden moods of poetic reverie full of delicate charm. We see in him, however, all the great spiritual qualities of his father—his mystic vision, his sympathetic and loving outlook on life, his tenderness to the poor, his love of solitude and meditation, his distaste for riches, and his high moral sense and sweetness of ethical nature.

We must remember also the Maharshi's burning patriotism when we come to study and realise Sir Rabindranath Tagore's intense and glowing love of this holy land. The Maharshi records in burning words in his *Autobiography* how on hearing of the conversion to Christianity of some Zenana ladies he began to organise the forces of Hinduism. He says: "I went about in a carriage every day from morning till evening to all the leading and distinguished men in Calcutta, and entreated them to adopt measures by which Hindu children would no longer have to attend missionary schools and might be educated in schools of our own." (Page 100). Again, he says: "If I could preach the Brahma Dharma as based upon the Vedanta, then all India would have one religion, all dissensions would come to an end, all would be united in a common brotherhood, her former valour and power would be

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revived, and finally she would regain her freedom. Such were the lofty aspirations which my mind then entertained." (Page 102).

The Maharshi had the same quiet humour and irony that we see also in the son. He says: "The Burmese eat crocodiles. The Buddhist doctrine of *Ahimsa* (non-killing) is on their lips; but crocodiles are inside their stomachs." (Page 186). Again, he describes how the temple *pandas* pursued him once for presents even after he had left the temple. He describes in another place the Prayag Pandas. "As soon as my boat touched the shore, there was a regular invasion of pandas, who boarded it." In another place in his *Autobiography*, we see his irony full of love and pity.

> "Then again Akshaykumar Datta started a Friends' Society, in which the nature of God was decided upon by show of hands. For instance somebody asked, 'Is God the personification of bliss or not?' Those who believed in his blissfulness held up their hands. Thus the truth or otherwise of God's attributes was decided by a majority of votes! Amongst many of those who surrounded me, who were as my very limbs, I could no longer see any signs of religious feeling or piety; each only pitted his own intellect and power against the others." (Pages 203-4).

We see in Maharshi the power of artistic presentation, the grace of style, the eye for beauty, and the

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ear for harmony that we see in a perfect form in the poet. I shall give here a few examples from his *Autobiography* to show this.

"This Taj is the *taj* (crown) of the world. Ascending a minaret, I saw the sun setting in the western horizon, making it one mass of red. Beneath was the blue Jumna. The pure white Taj in the midst, with its halo of beauty, seemed to have dropped on the earth from the moon." (Page 211). "On a cloudy evening I saw the peacocks dancing, with wings raised above their heads. What a wonderful sight! If I could play the *Vina* I would have done so, in tune to their dancing." (Pages 219-220). "I had never seen such a beautiful flowering creeper before: My eyes were opened, and my heart expanded; I saw the universal Mother's hand resting on those small white blossoms. Who was there in this forest to inhale the scent of these flowers or see their beauty? Yet with what loving care had she endowed them with sweet scent and loveliness, moistened them with dew, and set them upon the creeper! Her mercy and tenderness became manifest to me. Lord! When such is Thy compassion for these little flowers, what must be the extent of Thy mercy for us?" (Page 240). "The mighty current of this stream (Nagari) dashing against the huge elephantine

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rocks contained in its bosom, becomes fierce and foaming, and with a thundering sound rolls on to meet the sea, by command of the Almighty. From both its banks two mountains rise up straight to a great height like immense walls, and then incline backwards. The rays of the sun do not find room enough to remain here long ....Only one man was living there with his family in one room, which was not a room, but a cave in the rocks. Here they cooked and here they slept. I saw his wife dancing joyfully with a baby on her back, and another child of hers running about on a dangerous part of the hill, and his father sowing potatoes in a small field. God had provided everything necessary for their happiness here. Kings sitting on their thrones rarely found such peace and happiness as this." (Pages 243-244).

"In the evening I was walking alone on the banks of this river, charmed with its beauty, when I looked up suddenly, and found the hill was lighted up with flames. As the evening wore on and night advanced, the fires also began to spread. Like arrows of fire, a hundred thousand sparks fell swift as stars, and attacked the trees below, down to the banks of the river. By degrees every tree cast off its own form and assumed the form of fire, and blind darkness

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fled afar from the spot. As I looked upon this wonderful form of fire, I felt the glory of that Divinity who dwells in fire. Before this, in many a wood, I had seen charred trees that bore witness to forest fires, and in the night I had seen the beauty of fires burning on the distant hills; but here I was delighted to see for myself the origin, spread, growth, and arrest of a forest fire. It went on burning all night; whenever I woke up during the night, I saw its light. When I got up in the morning I saw many charred trees still smoking, and here and there the all-devouring ravenous fire burning in a dim and exhausted manner, like the lamps remaining in the morning after a festive night." (Pages244-245).

We have thus been privileged to see the uncommon possession of great and similar talents in the great father and his greater son. Such instances have been seen though rarely in life. The instances of Dumas *pere* and Dumas *fils*, and of Chatham and Pitt will occur to the minds of all. We are thus able to realise from the Maharshi's *Autobiography* whence were derived the unique qualities of Sir Rabindranath Tagore's splendid poetic genius.

III. Tagore's Artistic and Spiritual Ancestry.

It is a remarkable phenomenon that in India the greatest poets have also been the greatest saints and

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religious teachers of the land. If spirituality is the dominant note in our life, it can be expected to be, and is, the dominant note in our art which is only the expression of the intenser, purer, and happier moments of our life. The greatest architects, sculptors, painters, poets, and singers of the Hindu race have been profoundly spiritual and some of them are the greatest sages, seers, and saints of India.

It is not my purpose here to trace the growth of art and religion in India and to show their mutual influence and interaction. That is a great task by itself, and will have to be taken up separately, if it is to be properly performed. The great Bhakti movement, which was the most potent inspiring force in life and in art in ancient and mediaeval India, which is active—if only fitfully and sporadically—even now, and by the luminous rejuvenescence of which alone our national rebirth can be accomplished, was neither new, nor due to outside influences, in our land. It is as old as the Hindu race itself, and there are in the Upanishads not merely modes of worship and hymns of adoration of God but passages full of the rapture of love and devotion bearing the soul to His lotus feet in an ecstasy of happiness. Having regard to the purpose of this work, I shall consider here briefly only the great spiritual ideas of a few devotional poets and singers of genius in mediaeval and modern India to show how the art of Tagore has been influenced and inspired by them. If his father helped to

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mould his inner nature by the force of his personality, they have been in an even larger measure responsible for the beautiful manifestation and development of his supreme poetical development. To understand Tagore without understanding them and their inspiring, purifying, and uplifting influence is an impossible task. He has already translated one hundred poems of Kabir and we learn that he has further finished the English translation of the works of Vidyapathi and Chandidas. Dr. A. K. Coomaraswami says: "Vaishnava art is correspondingly humanistic, and it is from this school of thought that the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore derives. In it are echoed the teaching of such prophets as Sri Chaitanya and poets such as Jayadev and Chandidas, who sung of the religion of love." (*Art and Swadesi*, p. 116).

The religion of *Prema Bhakti* (ecstasy of love) that these great saints and poets taught centres mostly round the divine personality of Krishna, though in some localities it centres round Rama and in Southern India round Siva as well as Vishnu. Those who have heard the inspiring and uplifting songs contained in the *Thevaram*, *Thiruvachagam*, and *Tiruvoimozhi* in Southern India will realise that this religion of love has overflowed the whole of India like a swelling tide from the ocean of divine bliss and has inspired art and sweetened life in this lovely and holy land. The spirit of ecstatic love that breathes through the songs of saint Andal is the

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same as that which has inspired Mira Bai, Chandidas, and Chaitanya. The love of the Gopis and especially of Radha—a miserably misunderstood episode in the life of Sri Krishna—has kindled in them an endless ecstasy of adoration. God is the Eternal Bridegroom and each human soul is His bride. The spiritual union of God and the soul solemnised before the Agni (Fire) of devotion is the consummation and highest bliss of life. When Mira Bai renounced her position as queen and went to Brindavan to worship and meditate on Krishna, a great devotee and ascetic, Rup Goswami, refused to see her as she was a woman. She sent word to him : "Mira knows that in Brindavan there is but one man Sri Krishna. Many others live here, it is true, but as they all dwell in His love they are all but the maids of Gokula. If, therefore, by some mischance Rup Goswami, being a man, has entered the abode of the maids of our Lord—he should fly, for if found out he will be chastised." Then he was surprised at her wisdom and devotion and agreed to see her. It is said of Shri Krishna that he showed his attribute of beauty and love at Brindavan, his attribute of wisdom at Mathura, and his attributes of universal sovereignty, compassion, and service at Dwaraka. To the lovers and devotees of Krishna, he appears sweetest as Krishna of Brindavana. The songs of Chandidas describe such love of God in rapturous terms. This heaven of love has been so near the earth in India for many centuries, and it is no wonder that

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life and art in India have been transfigured by the play of the light of divine love. It was in India that God's love for man and man's love for God were realised in a vivid, intense, and passionate form. God was recognised and loved not merely as Father but as Mother, Child, Friend, Lord, and Lover. To realise the beauty of this a vividness of inner vision and a mystical sense of the divine presence brooding over everything are required. God is the Father of the world in a mystical sense as he is not the direct physical progenitor of any created being. The Hindu mind has recognised that we have to rise from plane to plane of love, relate each lower form of love to the divine, and extend the boundaries and deepen the depth of each form of love till we rise to a practical realisation of the beauty and sweetness of God and rise to the highest raptures of the love of God.

How difficult it is for an outsider to enter into this paradise of the religion of love is apparent from the recent book of Mr. Ernest Rhys on Tagore. He says : "To be sure, in the Indian mythology, Siva appears to lie beyond the sphere of pleasure and pain ; the immovable amid the flux of things, eternity in the midst of time . . . . . Siva has a wife, Uma, but he is no provident mate ; he is old and rascally, and so poor that he is unable even to find a pair of shell-bracelets for his bride, though she is the daughter of a King, and that King is mount Himavathi. . . . . . Among the true followers of Siva the form of Uma represents the

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fineness and delicacy of earthly life, and that of Siva the terror and grimness of death." If he had known the supreme beauty and sweetness of the *Siva leelas* as read and loved in Southern India—which rival the *Rama leelas* and *Krishna leelas* in point of their overflowing divine tenderness and their emotional appeal—and if he had known the descriptions of Siva's beauty and bounty and love in that perfect gem of devotional poetry—the *Tiruvachagam*—and in the sweet *Thevarams*, he would not have fallen into such a phenomenal error.

I wish to deal here a little elaborately with Shri Krishna Chaitanya, because his influence on the religion of love, devotion, and mystical emotion, and on the musical art of Bengal, has been of a unique character. It is a peculiar and even significant fact that Chandidas and Chaitanya lived for sometime in villages near Bolpur. Chaitanya was called Nimai in early life. His boyhood was full of fun and frolic and gave little indication of his coming greatness. But even then his beauty, gentleness, sweetness, and love of Hari were remarkable. Babu Shishir Kumar Ghose's *Lord Gauranga* and Professor Jadunath Sircar's Chaitanya's *Pilgrimages* and *Teachings* give us some of the idea of the artistic and spiritual wealth lying in *Chaitanya-Charitamrita*, *Chaitanya Bhagavata*, *Chaitanya Mangala*, and *Chaitanya-Chandrodaya*. Nimai then became a great grammarian and logician and was accepted as a Pandit of genius even in intellectual Naddea (Nawadwipa). The illumination

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of love filling him with an infinite gentleness and tenderness and overthrowing all his assertive pride of intellect came to him when he saw the foot-print of Shri Krishna at Gaya. " The attention of everybody engaged in the worship of the foot-print was directed on him. They saw a young man of twenty-three, of herculean proportions, graceful beyond comparison, with a skin as fair as molten gold, and eyes luminous and soft as the petals of the lotus flower, with which he looked on the foot-print with a steadfast gaze, unconscious of the presence of those who were watching him with such intense interest." (Shishir Kumar Ghose's *Lord Gauranga*, Vol. I, page 68).

From this time forward he was under divine influence and Shri Krishna manifested himself in him. Chaitanya-Bhagavata says :

" A form, brighter than a thousand moons,
And fairer far than a thousand gods of love ;
The lord and his worshippers wrapped in light,
And everything besides."

The book referred to above says : " Nimai sometimes represented Shri Krishna and sometimes Radha. When he sits on the sacred dais, he is Shri Krishna ; when he weeps for Shri Krishna he is Radha. So Lord Nimai had not only Radha's love for Shri Krishna, but also Radha's love for human creatures." (Page 219). His *Kirtanas* and dancing won the hearts of human beings and uplifted them into the heaven of

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Krishna's love. The Vaishnava songs of love are things of beauty and kindle love and joy in our hearts. Here is one of them quoted in the above said book.

> " Ferry us over to the other bank, O beautiful Pilot !
> We have come to your Ghat for that purpose.
> We are poor and therefore cannot pay the ferry-toll.
> And wherefore do we come to your ghat ?
> Because we have been assured, you are merciful."

The following stanza from Prabhodananda's *Chaitanya Chandramrita* shows well what Chaitanya did for the world.

> धर्मास्पृष्टः सततपरमाविष्ट एवात्यधर्मे
> दृष्टिं प्राप्तोनहिखलुसतां सृष्टिपु क्वापिनो सन् ।
> यद्दत्तश्रीहरिरससुधास्वादुमत्तः प्रनृत्य
> त्युच्चैर्गायत्यथविलुठति स्तौमितं किंचिदीशं ॥

(I adore as far as is possible to one of my limited powers Lord Gauranga who made people mad with the nectar of Hari's love and made them dance, sing, and even roll on the ground in ecstasy, though they had never had the sanctifying touch of Dharma but lived in sin and had never been looked at by a saint's compassionate eyes or lived in a holy place).

Tagore owes a great deal by way of inspiration to Chandidas, Vidyapathi, Chaitanya, Garuda Das, Mukundarama, Tulsidas, Harichand, Mehr Das, Sur Das, Mira Bai, Tukaram, and other poets and saints. Of course no great poet ever borrows ideas or words from other

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poets ; but the divine atmosphere that he breathes with their aid makes their joys and ideals his own. I must further point out that through Kabir and Nanak the spirit of Sufiism also influenced him a great deal. Sufiism is the mystical blossoming of Islam under the transforming touch of the higher Hinduism, just as in mediaeval India the influence of Islam led to certain developments in Hinduism. The Sufis regarded the existence of the soul as pre-natal and held that the full perception of earthly beauty was the remembrance of Supreme Beauty in the spiritual world and that in spite of the veil of the body the soul could behold the Divine Mysteries through love and ecstasy (*Hal*). Sufiism regarded creation as a manifestation of Eternal Beauty. Jami says in his poem *Yusuf-u-Zulaykha* :

> " His beauty everywhere doth show itself,
> And through the forms of earthly beauties shines
> Obscured as through a veil . . . .
> Where'er thou seest a veil,
> Beneath that veil he hides. Whatever heart
> Doth yield to love, He charms it. In His love
> The heart hath life. Longing for Him, the soul
> Hath victory."

Man was a divine emanation, and the Sufis held that man's supreme desire was to be reunited with the Beloved. Jami, the great Sufi poet, says :

> " Gaze, till Gazing out of Gazing
> Grew to Being Her I Gaze on,

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She and I no more, but in One
Undivided being blended.
All that is not One must ever
Suffer with the wound of Absence ;
And whoever in Love's City
Enters, finds but Room for One,
And but in "Oneness Union."

Mr. Hadland Davis says : "We follow that invisible figure from land to land, from heart to heart, from death into life, on and on. When Love loves Love for its own sake, we shall meet Him. We shall find the Beloved to be the Perfection, the realisation of that strong desire that made us lose ourselves in others. The more we lose ourselves in God, the more we find Him . . . . Love God's light in men and women and not the lanterns through which It shines, for human bodies must turn to dust ; human memories, human desires, fade away. But the love of the All-Good, All-Beautiful remains, and when such is found in earthly love it is God finding Himself in you, and you in Him. That is the supreme teaching of Sufiism, the religion of Love." (Introduction to Jalaluddin Rumi, Wisdom of the East Series). Abu Hashim, Rabia, Attar, Bayazid, Al-Hallaj, Hafiz, Sadi, Jami, Rumi, and others made Sufiism a powerful spiritual force. Mr. Davis says in his introduction to Jami : "It is in silence, in the quiet places of our hearts, rather than on the housetops of much controversy, that we can hear the sweet call of the Beloved and forget the clanging of the world in the

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Great Peace which He alone can give." In Kabir, Nanak and others both streams of mystical emotion—Indian and Sufi—met and mingled into a mightier stream. Tagore has recently translated one hundred poems of Kabir and has been profoundly influenced by him.

It must be further remembered that Tagore belongs to the Brahmo Samaj, which has been influenced in no small measure by Christianity. Hence his mind bears traces of dislike of idolatry and of some of the social ideals of Hinduism. But as his mind has no intellectual narrowness and as his heart is full of love, he has been able to rise above all petty man-made barriers between religion and religion. His mystical vision has enabled him to see the inner spiritual significance of much that a hard-headed and hard-hearted man might brush aside as idolatry or theology or metaphysics. In him it is the Hindu genius that is predominant and irradiates everything else.

IV. THE INDIAN RENAISSANCE.

We can never understand Tagore aright if we do not realise the new Indian Renaissance now going on before our eyes. The movement is now as wide as life and as deep as love and as high as heaven. Its manifestations must be sought not in this sphere of activity or that but everywhere. Of course in the lower forms of activity it will be difficult to say whether what we see

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is a growth from within or an ornamental and sometimes tawdry addition from without. But in the case of literature, art, and religion which are securely rooted in the race consciousness and are the finest flowers of racial life, we see unmistakable signs of an overflowing vitality that is bringing about a healthy growth and expansion from within.

There is a vital point of difference between the Indian Renaissance and the movement known as the Renaissance in Europe. There the inspiration came from a different land and a dead literature. Here it has come from a living land and a living literature—and these our own. The India of to—day is like the Phœnix emerging bright from its own ashes after it becomes old and desires to be born again. If the Renaissance in Europe was a liberation of the human spirit *per se*, the Indian Renaissance is a liberation of the human spirit that is in harmony with the divine. J. A. Symonds said in regard to the Renaissance in the west : " The history of the Renissance is the history of the attainment of the self-conscious freedom by the human spirit manifested in the European races. What the word really means is new birth to liberty, the spirit of mankind recovering consciousness and the spirit of self-determination, recognising the beauty of the outer world and of the body through art, liberating the reason in science, and the conscience in religion, restoring culture to the intelligence and establishing the principle of political freedom."

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All these great traits are seen to be integral manifestations of the spirit of the Indian Renaissance also.

What shall we say about the blessed part that England has been taking in the awakening? When the humanity of the future records its impartial ideas as to the unfolding of the human spirit, she will bless England for the liberation of the human spirit that she is achieving in India. No contemporary misrepresentations, hatreds, or passions, will obscure the clarity of her vision. Though the Indian Renaissance owes its ultimate inspiration to India and her ever-living ideals, the warm breath of spring that loosens the grip of the dead hand of winter over the heart has come from

> " That other Eden, semi-paradise,
> That precious stone set in the silver sea."

England has been freeing the national spirit from its fetters in India ; but the unconquerable spirit was there already and has been shining forth in the quenchless fire of her eyes and the quenchless love in her heart which made her

> " To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite ;
> To forgive wrongs darker than death or night ;
> To defy Power, which seems Omnipotent ;
> To love, and bear ; to hope till Hope creates
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates ;
> Neither to change, nor flatter, nor repent."

The two great divisions of the Aryan race have now met in this holy land for mutual uplift and inspiration

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England—the champion of freedom, the emancipator of slaves, the protector of small states and treaty obligations —has brought to us the gift of a rational study of nature and its problems, the historical method, national spirit, lofty ideals of citizenship and patriotism, constitutional government, and political genius. India's power of imagination, emotional refinement, spiritual insight and rapture, and meditative passion is alive and in vigorous life, and England will receive from her elder sister, her message of the unity and divine purpose of life, of divine immanence, of the sovereignty of love, of the spiritual kinship of all, of *ahimsa*, of *santhi*, of universal toleration, and of the love of God being the crowning glory of life. England will teach India the art of citizenship; India will convey to her the art of life. England will instruct India in the arts of outer peace in the realms of social and political life; India will convey to her the art of inner peace in the heaven of the soul. The world waits in expectation and eager longing for the time

> "When East and West without a breath
> Mix their dim lights like life and death
> And broaden into boundless day.

Some people are of opinion that India's message was one of quietism and that a life of activity has come into existence here only after we heard the call of the East. A more erroneous notion than this cannot be imagined. To say this of a race that has given the *Gita* to the

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world, that has lived a strenuous life, that has achieved social peace and co-ordination and spiritual progress, that has been pre-eminent in the fine arts and the industrial arts, that has reverenced womanhood and whose women have been mothers of heroes, that spread over the Eastern world in the course of its self-development, that was supreme in commerce and was the richest country in the world, and that was the mother of philosophy and religion—a race that, in spite of fierce assaults from without and dissensions within, has been true to its light and has outlived other civilisations and is now living "not in decay, not a mere antique, but full of life and youthful vigour—" is a gross libel and argues an utter want of vision.

Yet we must recognise with gratitude and love, as I have already stated, the liberation of the spirit that is being achieved by England in India. It will be beyond the scope of this book to describe this great task and the adequate manner in which England is performing it in India. The English language—that noble and highly-evolved organ of thought—has become a portion of our life and is the chief instrument of national uplift, though it is now being degraded to the position of a fetish and once more illustrates the supreme truth of Tennyson's warning to beware

"Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

England is fostering a spirit of scientific investigation and research, and reviving the desire for interrogating

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nature, the fruits of which once went through Arabia from India into Europe and gave an impetus to scientific development there. She has given us great ideals of civic responsibility and civic freedom, which will in course of time unify the warring sections of humanity in this land.

Some sceptics within and without have doubted whether national life ever existed, or can exist in India. But their scepticism is due to their inability to look deep enough. They would deny unity even to the human personality, because they find in it various elements—senses, intellect, emotion, and will. Sister Nivedita says in her *Revival or Reform*: "So far from there being any color of truth in the statement that she has been hopelessly divided and sub-divided for thousands of years, the very reverse is the case. We do not regard the garden as divided against itself, because the flowers in it are of many different hues. Nor is India divided? She has, on the contrary, unfathomed depths of potentiality for civic organization, for united corporate action." (Page 149, *Select Essays*, published by Messrs. Ganesh and Co.,). As has been well said, the people of this sacred land find "in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in all things charity." In his valuable book on the *Fundamental Unity of India* Radhakumud Mookerji says: "The primary requisite for the birth and growth of a nation is the certainty, fixity, and permanence of place, and when that is assured the other formative forces will appear and make themselves

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felt in due course. A common fatherland is preliminary to all national development; round that living nucleus will naturally gather all those feelings, associations, traditions and other elements which go to make up a people's language and literature, religion and culture, and establish its separate existence and individuality, . demanding its preservation and independent development as a valuable cultural unit. The unifying influence of a common country, of common natural surroundings, is indeed irresistible, and the assertion may be safely made that it will be effectively operative against other disintegrating, disruptive forces and tendencies such as differences in manners and customs, language and religion" (pages 3–4). The unity was recognised by the masterspirits of the past who gave the whole land a single name, *Bharatavarsha.* The popular phrase is *Himavatsetuparyantam* A Sanscrit verse says : जननीजन्मभूमिश्च स्वर्गादपि गरीयसी । (The mother and the motherland are more adorable than heaven). The holy hills, streams, and shrines of India make the entire land sacred and dear beyond expression. Kasi, Mathura, Dwaraka, Ayodhya, Kanchi ; Himalayas, Vindhya, Satya, Malaya ; Sindhu, Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswathi, Narmada, Godavari, Kaveri ; Dandakaranya, Naimisaranya, etc.; the shrines of Viswanatha, Jagannatha, Venkatesa, Ranganatha, and Ramalinga:—what blessed, purifying, uplifting names are here ! From Badari to Kanyakumari is holy land in the

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eyes of all. The conception of a *Sarvabhama* king was a familiar one. It seems to me that this sacramental conception of the country is at the root of the whole matter. If the sceptic has a luminious vision of the soul of India,his scepticism will vanish altogether. Vincent Smith says in his *Early History of India* : " India, encircled as she is by seas and mountains, is indisputably a geographical unit, and, as such is rightly designated by one name. Her type of civilisation, too, has many features which differentiate it from that of all other regions of the world; while they are common to the whole country, or rather continent, in a degree sufficient to justify its treatment as a unit in the history of human, social, and intellectual development." (Page 5.)

In the same manner we should rise to the conception of the unity of the Hindu race. Whatever may have been the elements that went into the melting pot, the race had emerged into being long before historic time. The man that goes about moping in the museums of the mind and comes out and shouts at the top of his voice about Aryans and Dravidians, Bactrians and Mongols, and what not, is an enemy of India and a dangerous lunatic at large. The great significance of race is being more and more recognised all over the world. The divergence of racial types ought not to be a source of discord. but should be a source of harmony.

> " Shall the rose
> Cry to the lotus ' No flower thou,' the palm
> Call to the cypress ' I alone am fair ?"
> (Tennyson's Akbar's Dream.)

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Lord Beaconsfield says: "Race is everything; there is no other truth. And every race must fall which carelessly suffers its blood to become mixed." Mr. H. S. Chamberlain says in his great book on "The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century." "Nothing is so convincing as the consciousness of the possession of race. The man who belongs to a distinct, pure race, never loses the sense of it...Race lifts a man above himself." The distinctive traits of the Hindu race are its spirit of inwardness, its orderly social evolution, its acceptance of the principle of co-ordination as the basis of social action, its power of realising divine immanence, its love of the spiritual aspects of beauty, its passion for peace, its emotional refinement, its spirit of unbounded toleration and self-sacrifice, its reverence for life, its longing for divine communion, and its luminous self-poised rapture of contemplation and meditation and devotion. We must beware of any individual or national acts that will taint inner life of the race. Mr. C. W. Saleeby says: "There is no public nor private deed that may not affect, in ways unseen or seen, the quality of a people—so sensitive and impressionable is the life of a community, so great the consequences which may flow from the smallest cause." (*The Methods of Race—Regeneration.*) Sister Nivedita and Dr. A.K. Coomaraswami say in a recent book: "A single generation enamoured of foreign ways is almost enough in history to risk the whole continuity of civilisation and

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learning.........Ages of accumulation are entrusted to the frail bark of each passing epoch by the hand of the past, desiring to make over its treasures to the use of the future. It takes a certain stubbornness, a doggedness of loyalty, even a modicum of unreasonable conservatism may be, to lose nothing in the long march of the ages and even when confronted with great empires, with a sudden extension of the idea of culture or with the supreme temptation of a new religion, to hold fast what we have, adding to it only as much as we can healthfully and manfully carry".

Especially is the warning necessary in the case of literature and art. The writer of an excellent article in *The Centemporary Review.* (May, 1914) says: "An author must reveal not only a living creation, must not only make that creation instinct with his own personality, but must also inspire it with his own national life. There is no internationalism in literature, though the interchange of literature is one of the best solvents of national differences'. Dr. Coomaraswami, who is the greatest champion of national art in modern India, says: "There is no more searching test of the vitality of a people than the revelation in art—plastic, literary, musical—of their inward being". Again, he says: "Have you ever thought that India, politically and economically free, but subdued by Europe in her inmost soul, is scarcely an ideal to be dreamt of, or to live or die for ?" Again ; "But let us not love art because it will

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bring to us prosperity ; rather because it is a high function of our being, a door for thoughts to pass from the unseen to the seen, the source of those high dreams and the embodiment of that enduring vision that is to be the Indian nation; not less, but more strong and more beautiful than ever before, and the gracious giver of beauty to all the nations of the earth." Indian art is, as can well be expected from the genius of the race, idealistic and religious. Mr. Havell says : "The inspiration of Vedic thought, which still permeates the whole atmosphere of Indian life, as the originating impulse of Indian art, and the influence which links together all its historic phases . . . . Throughout Indian art, and throughout the Christian art of the middle ages, we find the same central idea —that beauty is inherent in spirit, not in matter......... It is *bhakthi* which now keeps Indian art alive ; it is the lack of it which makes modern western art so lifeless." (*The Ideals of Indian Art.*) Dr. Coomaraswami says in his Essays in National Idealism. " India is wont to suggest the eternal and inexpressible infinities in terms of sensuous beauty...........Life is not to be represented for its own sake, but for the sake of the divine expressed in and through it." (page 31.)

I have quoted freely above to bear out the truth of the view pleaded for here. The artistic and literary awakening in Bengal and the artistic work of Ravi Varma in South India show that India is beginning to

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recognise the truth of this view vividly and passionately. It is in the intensification and practical unfoldment of this new-born spirit that the salvation of India lies. Sister Nivedita says: "Not only to utter India to the world, but also, to voice India to herself,—this is the mission of art, divine mother of the ideal, when it descends to clothe itself in the forms of realism."

I must here say a few words on the vexed question about the vernaculars. There are two kinds of faddists who are both bent on killing them. One says that they must all go and make room for the English language. Another says that they are even now in a flourishing condition and need no looking after. One wonders whether they have any eyes that enable them to see what is going on around us. If any one thinks that a great and vital and enduring literature can be built up by Indians in the English tongue, he is a hopeless dreamer. The uniform testimony of history is against any such possibility. The English language has its due place in our life to express the new-born forces in the Indian world and to interpret India to England. But the highest heaven of literature and art can be reached by us only through the medium of Sanscrit and the Vernaculars. The soul of a race is in intimate and vital touch with the language or languages of the race. If you kill the one, you kill the other also. Victor Hugo says: "One idea has never more than one form peculiarly its own.

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Kill the form and you nearly always kill the ideal.' As a matter of fact the elevation of English to the rank of a fetish has killed the divine Sanscrit tongue and the beautiful vernaculars to a large extent. English should never be the medium of instruction till at least the fourth form is reached in the school classes. I should be glad to see it learnt as a second language up to the entrance class. Further, the Sanscrit, a vernacular, and the Hindi tongue or the Bengali should be learnt throughout the course. We shall then be in touch with the past, handle our mother tongue with power, know one language that will keep us in touch with the whole India, and be able with the help of English to enter the shrine of political growth, civic progress, scientific and historical study, and rationalistic attitude which England has thrown open to us. If, as the present moment the vernaculars live, it is because of the inherent vitality of the race. But systematic poisoning of the springs of life may kill even the irrepressible vitality of the Hindu race. That vernaculars have great potentialities and possibilities as vehicles of progressive thought has been demonstrated to the whole world by Bengal. A great and holy succession of poets in mediæval and modern India have demonstrated their power as vehicles of religious emotion and artistic presentation of life. If our leaders through their love for sonorous thunderings in English sacrifice the best interests of their land in their blindness of vision, the malady

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will soon pass beyond the stage of cure and a great type will disappear for ever. We must give up our insane habit of speaking and writing in English except in the case of subjects in regard to which the vernaculars are not as yet sufficiently developed to express them well or where we have to address mixed audiences. We must give up our suicidal habit of writing letters—even marriage invitation letters—in English, and diluting and even adulterating our spoken language with English words. Tagore's best work is in Bengali and he addresses Bengali audiences only in the Bengali tongue. The modern system of education is costly and examination-ridden while the task of learning everything in English from boyhood crushes all energy and originality out of existence; it is rigid, there being no attempt to develop individual aptitudes ; it does not train the mind of young India in the fields of science and technical skill properly ; it is regarded in a purely commercial spirit ; it is divorced from religion, morality, and Indian culture and art ; and it is not calculated to kindle in our hearts, love for the past or enthusiasm for the future, love of India, love of man, or love of God. Shall we be wise in time ?

The Bengali Renaissance is only a phase of the general Renaissance in India. In literature and art Bengal has produced great personalities, and the achievements of Madhusudan Dutt, Toru Dutt, Bankim Chunder Chatterjea, Swami Vivekananda, Tarak Nath Ganguli, R.C. Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore, Abanindranath

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Tagore, and other great men show how Bengal has a conspicuous record of work to its credit. Mr. Rhys says of the Bengali language : " We have to talk with one whose mother-tongue it is to appreciate its full resource, and those elements and qualities in it which have made it pliant under the lyric spell. We test a language by its elasticity, its response to rhythm, by the kindness with which it looks upon the figurative desires of the child and the poet. In these essentials Bengali proves its right to a place among the regenerative tongues of the world." In art as well as in literature, modern Bengal has been original as well as national and has accomplished a great deal of admirable work.

In this renaissance Tagore has played a great part. He has not merely interpreted the East to the West. The *Daily Chronicle* said of him: "Others have been dazzled by the mystery, the brightness, the immensity of India; we have drunk deep of its colour. But Mr. Tagore brings us its mind." He has done more than this. He is the greatest modern national poet of India.

Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe well says. " The life of India is still favourable to the development of the poet who is also thinker and man of affairs — although, we may be quite sure, it will not prove to be so for the creative genius of to-morrow. For Rabindranath Tagore, at any rate, the lines have been laid in the pleasantest of places. His songs are part of the popular culture of

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Bengal. He has been a force in the literary renaissance of Modern India. Inheriting a fine intellectual tradition, he has been honoured as priest and teacher in his own religious community, and as an intellectual leader among the aspiring young adherents of Indian Nationalism".

The Rev. Mr. C. F. Andrews said of him in his great address at the Viceregal Lodge, at Simla in 1913 : "He is to day the national poet of Bengal in a sense that Shakespeare was the national poet of England in the days of Queen Elizabeth. Of all the poets living in the world to-day there is none, as far as I am able to judge, except Rabindranath, who holds this unique position with regard to his own people, and it is this which gives a freshness, a spontaneity, a width of humanity to his work, which is altogether refreshing in our own somewhat artificial age." The Viceroy whose sympathy, insight, and love in regard to the Indians is well-known described Tagore in his closing address as "the Poet Laureate of Asia". Tagore has expressed in the thirty-fifth poem in the *Gitanjali* which I have quoted elsewhere his ideal of national patriotism. Not only has he expressed a lofty ideal of patriotism ; not only did he preside over the Provincial Conference at Pabna in 1908; not only has he served India nobly and well by songs and poems: but he has dedicated his life to her; he is seeking by his Bolpur School and his industrial and art school to uplift his countrymen into

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that region of self-sacrificing service for the motherland in which he has achieved such great results; and the master-passion of his life is this supreme desire to serve India. His patriotic hymns deserve a more than passing mention in this connection. He is India's greatest singer of national songs. One of them has been translated thus :

> Blessed is my birth, because I was born in the country, blessed is my life, mother, because I have loved thee.
>
> I do not know if thou hast wealth and riches like a Queen. I know this much that my limbs are cooled as soon as I stand in thy shade.
>
> I know not in what grove blossom flowers that madden the soul with such scents—I know not the sky where the moon rises with such sweet smiles.
>
> My eyes were first opened in thy light, and they will be closed, finally, upon that very light.

His *Sonar Bangala* is sung by even the most illiterate classes in Bengal. Thus his part in the Indian Renaissance is unique, and his greatness as a national poet of India has not been equalled by any other poet in recent times.

V. His Life.

He was born in Calcutta in 1861. The Tagore family is one of the most ancient and distinguished families in Bengal. I have already referred to his father

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Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore. The poet lost his mother early in his life. The child was early led to seek sympathy and love in the company of Mother Nature. Mr. C. F. Andrews says in the lecture that I have already referred to: "He told me first of all about his father, the great Maharshi, the reverence and awe that he had for him in his childhood; how all the household became hushed and still, when he was present in the house, anxious not to disturb his spiritual meditations. He told me also how his mother died when he was quite young, and as he saw her face, calm and peaceful in death, it awakened in him no childish terror or mysterious sorrow. It was only as he grew older that he learnt death's meaning". The poet told him about his early life as follows:—

"I was very lovely—that was the chief feature of my childhood—I was very, very lovely. I saw my father but seldom, but his presence pervaded the whole house, and was one of the deepest unseen influences all through my life. I was kept, almost like a prisoner, all day long, in charge of the servants, and I used to sit day after day, in front of the window and picture to myself what was going on in the outer world. From the very first time I can remember I was passionately fond of Nature. Oh! it used to make me mad with joy when I saw the clouds come up in the sky one by one. I felt even in those very

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childish days that I was surrounded with a friend, a companionship, very intense and very intimate, though I did not know how to name it. I had such an exceeding love for nature, I cannot find words to describe it to you ; nature was a kind of companion, always with me, and always revealing to me some fresh beauty."

Tagore's *Jivan-smrithi* (Autobiography) appeared in the *Prabasi*. The Bengal Administration Report for 1912-1913 said of it : "The chief literary event of the year was the appearance of the autobiography of the famous poet Rabindranath Tagore." It is not available in English so far as I know. It and the book by Tagore called *Chinna-Patra* (Torn Letters) are very important works to understand the early unfolding of Tagore's unique poetic genius. The following translation of a passage from *Jivan-smrithi*, given in Mr. Andrew's lecture on Tagore, is beautiful.

"In the morning of autumn I would run into the garden the moment I got up from sleep. A scent of leaves and grass, wet with dew, seemed to embrace me, and the dawn, all tender and fresh with the new-awakened rays of the sun, held out her face to me to greet me beneath the tremble ing vesture of palm leaves. Nature shut her hands and laughingly asked every day, "what have I got inside ? ' and nothing seemed impossible."

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The members of the Maharshi's family are all distinguished persons. The eldest son Dwijendranath Tagore is a great philosopher who is so full of gentleness and love, "that the squirrels come from the boughs and climb on to his knees and the birds alight upon his hands." The second son was the first Indian to enter the Indian Civil Service. The poet's cousins Gaganendranath Tagore and Abanindranath Tagore are great artists. One of the Maharshi's daughters conducts the *Bharathi* magazine.

His schooldays were not happy and he always used to recall them with aversion. He used to speak of one schoolmaster who treated him cruelly and made him stand bareheaded in the sun for hours. It is said that in his boyhood owing to his dread of school life and its rigid, unimaginative, loveless, and cruel ways he used to soak his boots with water in order that he might fall ill and be excused from going to school. His father came to know of the unhappiness of his school life and then put him in the charge of private tutors. From these and from his brothers, Tagore picked up knowledge with phenomenal quickness. His natural passion for poetry, music, acting, and art led him to master all that was connected with them. Sweet Indian songs and beautiful Indian poetry used to move him profoundly, and kindle poetical and musical expression in him very early in life. The *Daily News* says : "There is one striking fact about the

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award of the Nobel prize for literature to Mr. Rabindranath Tagore. He is a unique example of an Indian who has had nothing to do with a University. And he is not a product of Lord Macaulay and British Government education. This has already been dwelt on, but if he had been to the University, the odds are that he would have been steam-rollered by the curriculum of that institution into the semblance of a pedagogue. A poet, we know, is born and not made, but few poets have got over a University career. The important thing, however, for India is to see that it is possible to achieve something—for it is an achievement to have obtained this award—without the imprimatur of a B. A. People have always suspected this, now they know it. Lord Stanhope used to say that 'education is all paint, it does not alter the nature of the wood underneath, but only improves its appearance,' and by education he meant pedagogy and Directors of Public Instruction."

Tagore's literary career began very early, his genius having been kindled by the songs of Chandidas and Vidyapathi. About the time of his real birth as a poet Tagore himserlf related the following to Mr. Andrews :—

> "It was morning. I was watching the sunrise in Free School Lane. A view was suddenly drawn and everything I saw became glorious. The whole world was one glorious music, one

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wonderful rhythm. The houses in the street, the men moving, the children playing, all seemed parts of one glorious whole— inexpressibly glorious. The vision went on for seven or eight days. Everyone—even those who annoyed me—seemed to lose their outer barrier of personality ; and I was full of gladness, full of love, for every person and every tiniest thing. Then I went to the Himalayas and looked for it there and I lost it. That was one of the first things which gave me the inner vision, and I have tried to explain it in all my poems. I have felt ever since that this was my goal, to express the fulness of life, in its beauty, as perfection,—if only the veil were withdrawn."

We have only to compare this with the vision that came to his father early in life—at the age of eighteen—as narrated in his Autobiography. Tagore's vision was of the beauty, love, and sweetness of the universe, while his father's vision was of the unsubstantiality of the world and the reality of God. The vision of each was conditioned by the peculiar bent of his genius as pointed out by me already.

Tagore accompanied his father when the latter travelled in Northern India and went to the Himalayas. He says in the *javan-smrithi* : "When I reached the Himalayas I thought I would have a fuller vision of that which I had witnessed of the glory of nature in the

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crowded street. But that was my great mistake. Up there the vision all departed. I thought I could get at truth from the outside. But, however lofty and imposing the Himalayas might be, they could not in that way put anything ready into my hands, but God, the great Giver of Himself, can open out the whole universe to our gaze in the narrow space of a single hand." The tour intensified in him the strong and ardent love for nature that he had already in his heart.

Thus Nature, his father, and the Vaishnava poets Vidyapathi and Chandidas led to an early blossoming of his powers. His early poems written by him under the name of Bhanu Simha were imitative and related to conventional themes. But in *Sandhya Sangit* (Songs of Sunset) and *Pravat Sangit* (Songs of Sunrise) he wrote original and romantic poems. Dr. Seal says : "In these songs Bengali poetry rises to the height of neo-romanticism." They are intensely subjective. The following are the titles of some of the poems in *Sandhya Sangit*—"Despair in Hope," "Suicide of a Star," "Invocation to Sorrow," "The woman without a Heart," "Hearts' Monody," etc. The names of the poems in *Pravat Sangit* are "The Dream of the Universe," The Eternity of Life," "Reunion with Nature," "Desideria," "The Fountain awakened from its Dream," etc. These poems effected a revolution in Bengali poetry by their individual note and by bringing into existence a greater suppleness and expressiveness

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and a freer cadence and sweeter harmony in Bengali verse. At the age of fourteen he produced a musical opera called *The Genius of Valmiki*. I need not dwell further on these early productions of Tagore's genius here, as I am dealing with them in some detail in my eleventh Chapter.

At the age of seventeen he was sent to England and there joined the University College, where he is said to have studied English Literature for a time under Mr. John (now Viscount) Morley. He returned to India after a year, and subsequently went to England a second time. The *Daily Chronicle* says: "In his early manhood he came to England to study law, but, finding that that took him out of his element, he returned to India to write those lyrics and verses which have made his name known and loved throughout the length and breadth of his native land."

The next stage of his literary career was from his twenty-third year—the time of his marriage. The Maharishi asked him to go down and manage the Shilaida estate. Though Tagore did not like this enforced seclusion at first, his art owes its highest and deepest message to this portion of his life. He came to know the peasant life intimately and became conversant with the universal elements of joy and sorrow, longing and emotion, in the human heart. A Bengali Doctor of Medicine is quoted in Mr. Yeats' introduction to the *Gitanjali* as having said: "From his twenty-fifth year

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or so to his thirty-fifth perhaps, when he had a great sorrow, he wrote the most beautiful love-poetry in our language, words can never express what I owed at seventeen to his love-poetry. After that his art grew deeper, it became religious and philosophical ; all the aspirations of mankind are in his hymns. He is the first among our saints who has not refused to live, but has spoken out of life itself, and that is why we give him our love." He often lived a life of utter seclusion and meditation during this period. He says: " Sometimes I would pass many months without speaking, till even my own voice grew weak through lack of use." He used to write from this period onwards stories of the village life that he had seen. This was his " Short Story " period. Mr. Andrews says in his lecture above referred to : " His unshaken faith in the genius of his own country, its glorious past, and its still more glorious future,received his strongest confirmation from what he saw in the villages of Bengal. He spoke to me with the greatest possible warmth and affection of his loved Bengali village people and of the many lessons he owed to them, patience, simplicity, and human sympathy."

Then came what he called his *Varsha shesha*—the close of a period. He apprehended some great change in his life and desired to serve his Motherland even more devotedly than before. Mr. Andrews says: " He went to Calcutta to start a school. His own school life

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had been, as he told me, an unhappy one—too wooden and conventional. He longed to work out a new educational model, which should bring the young into closer touch with Nature and inspire them with nobler ideals. This he accomplished later in his great school at 'Shanti Niketan,' Bolpur." He was further in financial trouble then. He said to Mr. Andrews.

> "I sold my books, my copyrights, everything I had, in order to carry on the school. I cannot tell you what struggle it was and what difficulties I went through. At first my object was purely patriotic, but later on it grew more and more spiritual. Then in the midst of those outer difficulties and trials an inner change came in my own life."

He lost first his beloved wife; a few months after his daughter died of consumption; and then his youngest son died of cholera. Mr. Andrews speaks reverently about what the poet told him in regard to these sorrows. Tagore told him :

> "You know this death was a great blessing to me. I had such a sense of fulness, as if nothing were lost. I felt that even if an atom 'seemed' lost, it 'could' not be lost. It was not mere resignation that came, but sense of a fuller life. I know now, at last, what death was. It was perfection—nothing lost, nothing lost."

It was during this period that the *Gitanjali* was

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written. The English translation contains a few poems from other works written a little earlier—*Naivedya Sishu* and *Kheya*. Mr. Andrews says in his great lecture which must continue to be *the* source of information and inspiration to all students and lovers of the poet: "They mark the period of transition in his own life, during which the poet's national and social longing became more and more spiritual and merged in the universal, just as in the earlier periods his passion for physical beauty and nature had become more purely spiritual as life advanced. It is this realization of the spiritual in and through the material—the material, as it were, becoming refined and luminous through life's experience—that appears to me the glory and the wonder of the poet."

He then went to England both for his health and to be with his son during his University career. He wrote to Mr. Andrews: "As I crossed the Atlantic I realised that a new stage in my life had begun, the stage of a voyager. To the open road: To the emancipation of self: To the realisation in love."

After going to England he has translated some of his poems in the books so well-known to all:—*Gitanjali*, *the Gardener*, and *the Crescent Moon*. His English lectures delivered in America and in England have been collected under the name *Sadhana*. He says that in the process of translation he had to strip his poems of their glory of decoration. "I found that I had to strip

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them of all their gaudy ornaments and clothe them in the simplest dress. "Mr. Andrews says :" That 'simplest dress' has now been seen to represent a most beautiful and rhythmic prose, which has actually enriched and enlarged the bounds of English literature. The triumph has been won (a triumph never before achieved in literary history), of a poet transcribing his own work into a wholly new medium, and giving his own poetic message in perfect poetic form, as it were, to two peoples speaking two different tongues. Of the effect of the little book *Gitanjali* on the mind of the thinking west it would be difficult to speak in strong enough terms. It has already been confidently declared by men of the highest literary reputation that the event of its publication is likely to mark a new epoch in English literature." Mr. Yeats says in his beautiful Introduction to the *Gitanjali*: "I have carried the manuscript of these translations about with me for days, reading it in railway trains, or on the top of omnibuses and in restaurants, and I have often had to close it, lest some stranger would see how much it moved me...The work of a supreme culture, they yet appear as much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the rushes......A whole people, a whole civilization, immeasurably strange to us, seems to have been taken up into this imagination." Tagore's English admirers said in their address : "You have dedicated your genius, the gift

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of God, to the purest ends, you have brought joy to the heart, serenity to the mind, music to the ears, images of beauty to the eyes, and to the soul the remembrance of its divine origin."

The award of the Nobel Prize to Tagore is well-known. It is awarded to the "most distinguished work of an idealistic tendency in the field of literature," and we know how worthy he is of the high honour. The award "was due to a distinguished Swedish orientalist who had read the poems in Bengali before they appeared in English." The Stockholm correspondent to the *Times* wrote on the 14th November 1913:

> "The Swedish poets Karfelt and Heidenstein and the writer Hallstrom, who are all members of the Academy (the Swedish Academy) have expressed their satisfaction with the award, and state that the Indian poet's works, although they have only recently become known in the western world, show an original poetic vein of great depth and undoubted literary merit"

The *Statesman* said. "The honour now conferred upon him sets the seal of international recognition upon his poetic genius" The *Hindu* stated. "The award of the Nobel prize for literature to Rabindranath Tagore is an honour so unique that it marks the ultimate height of appreciation". The *Englishman* said: "This is the first time that the Alfred Nobel prize has come to the East, and a reference to the list of previous

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winners is inspiring, for the Bengali muse is now to India what Maurice Macterlinck is to Belgium, Paul Heyse to Maunchen, Rudolf Eucken to Jena, or, to come nearer home what Rudyard Kipling is to English literature generally " Tagore has devoted the entire prize amount of £8,000 to the Bolpur school, a step that is in keeping with his deep patriotism, self-sacrifice, and unselfishness. The Calcutta University has conferred the degree of Doctor of Literature on him recently *i. e.* in December 1913. The full blossoming of his genius was about his fortieth year, and since then poems, songs, dramas, novels, stories, essays have been coming from the pure Himalaya of his mind in a divine Gangetic flood. I shall deal presently with his Bolpur School. He sent a Sanskrit poem recently through the Rev. C. F. Andrews to hearten the Indian heroes in South Africa. A few months ago he has started under the name of "Art House" a school for teaching arts and industries. "He has given a building (a part of his Calcutta residence) for the institution which has already started work with a dozen students and nine teachers. The school is open to both boys and girls, and the students include some girls, both married and unmarried. Small cottage industries, useful arts of every kind, and handicrafts of various descriptions are to form the subject of teaching. The curriculum is to include typewriting as well as shorthand. Sir Rabindranath Tagore's eldest brother, Babu Dwijendranath Tagore,

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has brought out a system of Bengali shorthand which will be a subject of study at the institution." Thus his life has been one of practical achievement and spiritual rapture, of activity and meditation, and he has been a shining example of what the higher mind of India can do to lift her up to her predestined place among the nations of the world and to carry her message of light and love to the ends of the earth.

VI. Tagore's Personality.

Tagore is a man of striking personal appearance. He is described as having been a very handsome man in his youth, and as having been a leader of fashion. A correspondent to the *Englishman* wrote in 1913: "Mr. Tagore looks a poet and is acknowledged to be a handsome man. Although he is now past his prime, he is still a fit subject for the brush of any painter. In his youth he was a leader of fashion in Bengal. He introduced among the educated Bengalis the fashion of keeping long wavy hair and what is known as the Napoleon beard. One afternoon Mr. Tagore went to lecture at a meeting, dressed all in white, that is, with his coat, dhoti, 'chader,' shoes, and socks all white, and carrying his manuscript (which was, of course, white) with a white cloth cover. The following day dressing in white became the craze among educated Bengalis." Another observer has said: "His is an aspect that fixes itself deeply in that uncertain medium,

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the retina of the memory. It is easy to call up at any moment a mental picture of that tall and graceful form in the long loose coat of grey-brown ; the white sensitive hands, large serenely-lit eyes, noble features, and curling hair and beard, dark and lightly touched with grey. Above all, the stately simplicity of his bearing struck me, for it implied a spiritual quality that diffused itself about his presence. The same thing helped to make him the kindest of hosts and gentlest of guests. Add to these qualities a certain incalculable gaiety ; and you will still fail to understand his immense personal influence with his own people." It is said : " He has the high forehead of a thinker, a flowing beard, flashing eyes, and a distinguished appearance."

We have a number of personal touches in regard to him that show the sweetness and unselfish charm of his nature. His purity and deeply religious nature are well known. Even his great domestic sorrows never soared his nature, but made his heart full of love and sympathy for all. Whenever he falls ill, he bears his ailments with great patience and uncomplainingly. He is of a very obliging disposition. He is very regular in his correspondence and replies to all his correspondents in his own handwriting. An admirer of Tagore says: "It is doubtful, however, in view of the recent increase in correspondence on account of his sudden rise to fame in Europe, whether the poet will be able to continue

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this practice, though greater and busier men, notably Mr. Gladstone, carried it on to the very close of life." He is an ideal landlord and his practical love for them is one of the most fascinating traits of his life. The work of the estate agents is strictly supervised and unpopularity and harsh treatment of the ryots are visited with dismissal. Remissions of rent are ungrudgingly given when inability to pay rent is shown. Rs. 57,595 were remitted in fasli 1312. There are several primary schools, one secondary English school, and a charitable dispensary in the estate. There is also an agricultural bank. The Settlement Officer of Naogaon says : "A very favourable example of Estate Government is shown in the property of the poet Dr. Rabindranath Tagore."

He is fond of swimming and rowing. But his chief recreation is singing. It is said that though he is not an expert in music even musical experts recognise and admit his instinct and genius for absolute music. It is said: "Often he has been heard singing from early morning till late at night, with only a break of an hour or so for noonday meal." He has taken part as actor in the staging of his dramas by his Shantiniketan boys. He is a beloved and popular speaker. It is a rapture to hear him read his own poetry. A correspondent wrote to the *Nation* in June 1913: "I lately had the extreme pleasure (if pleasure be the right word) of hearing Mr. Tagore, the Bengali Poet and Teacher, read one of his

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dramas to a small company. I hardly knew what astonished and moved me most—the beauty, gentleness, and gravity of the reader's face, and his complete unconsciousness of his audience, or the character of what he read. I was prepared to find that this was poetry of the highest order, and of a singular power to kindle the imagination and to hold it by the charm of expression and the sense of atmosphere. But it was more than this. One could not but feel that here was the voice of the East, after a silence of centuries, again speaking in parables and spiritual songs to the hard and coarsened ear of the West."

But the chief joy of his life is his love of nature. In a letter to a friend he says : " I am writing to you sitting in my room on the second floor of this house; a swelling sea of foliage is seen through the open doors all around me, quivering at the touch of the early winter's breath and glistening in the sunshine." To him nature was a fond mother gladdening the eyes of his soul with the bright blossoms of beauty and nourishing his spirit with the manna of sympathy and love. We may say of him what Morley says of Wordsworth : "Wordsworth's claim, his special gift, his lasting contribution, lies in the extraordinary strenuousness, sincerity, and insight with which he idealises and glorifies the vast universe around us, and then makes of it, not a theatre on which men play their parts, but an animate presence, intermingling with our works, pouring its companionable

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spirit above us, and breathing grandeur upon the very humblest face of human life"

His modesty is also very well-known and is a pleasing trait in his nature. We know how he received the deputation that waited on him at Shantiniketan to express the reverence and love of India for him, headed by such great and distinguished men as Mr. Justice Chaudhuri, Dr. J. C. Bose, and Dr. Indumadhab Mullick. The deputation went by special train. It is said: "The poet had arranged a reception to the members of the deputation in a poetical manner. He had the Rev. Mr. C. F. Andrews, a member of the professoriate attached to the College at the "Shantiniketan," in Bengali dress, dhoti and chadar, and a number of young students belonging to the school, in yellow garments waiting to receive the deputation at the Railway Station. The road from the station to Peace Cottage, a distance of more than a mile, was beautifully decorated, mango leaves, lotus leaves, festoons, and flowers figuring largely in the decorative scheme. The preponderance of mango leaves was significant in view of the Hindu belief that of all evergreens, the leaves of the mango tree are propitious. The way was strewn at intervals with cowries, coins, garlands of flowers, and paddy grain." The further details given are equally beautiful and win our hearts by the love of Indian customs and the passionate love of India that lie beneath it. "Some girls from the

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poet's family sang a welcome song in Bengali, and blew conch shells. A number of students of the Shantiniketan painted the foreheads of the guests, each and all, with sandal paste." Babu Hirendra Nath Dutt's short address on the occasion in Bengali is very sweet : "He whose poetic flute, from the inarticulate music of the infant heart in the dawn of life to the evening tune brightened with the glow of spirituality, is playing, and the rays of whose ever-growing genius have made the lives of Bengal's men and women so bright to-day ; who though particularly a Bengali poet has been installed on the sublime throne of honour among the poets of the world by the cosmopolitan appraisers of quality; a monarch of the kingdom, of thought and knowledge, the mystic poet of the land, Srijut Rabindranath Tagore ! young and old and the women of Bengal welcome you with the sandal paste of love and regard." The Rev. Mr. Milburn spoke in English praising the poet and expressing love and regard on behalf of the Christian and European communities in India, and said that some portions of "Gitanjali" formed a part of the daily prayer offered by Christian students in Bishop's College. On behalf of the Muhammadan community Moulvi Abdul Kasim spoke in praise of the poet. Mahamahopadhyaya Doctor Satis Chandra Vidyabhushan congratulated Tagore. Rai Bahadur Doctor Chunilal Bose praised him on behalf of "The Banjiya Sahitya Parishad", the great Literary Association of Bengal. Mr.

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Holland said that the poet had demonstrated the untruth of the lines of Mr. Rudyard Kipling that

> "East is east and West is west
> And never the twain shall meet".

and remarked: "The meeting place is in the spirit and in the temple of God, not made with hands." Mr. Tagore was then presented with a beautiful painting of the sun by Mr. S. Bhattacharya on behalf of the artists of Bengal. Never before was there such a great and historic occasion in the annals of poesy since the crowning of Petrarch with the laurel leaf. What was Tagore's reply? I shall not mar it by any comment and shall not stand between it and the reader. "He was not worthy of the welcome they were according to him on the occasion. He had never longed for fame. His claim is to the heart. In olden times when honouring a poet, a glass of wine used to be offered him and the poet would touch the glass with his lips and not drink the contents. He would also accept the cup of honour they had offered by touching it with his lips and would not let it spoil his heart."

His love of seclusion and meditation is also well-known. It is by this constant retirement into the temple of his heart in a spirit of prayerfulness, purity, and ecstacy of love and surrender that he has been able to keep up the sweetness of his nature and his unclouded radiance of vision. He lives mostly at Shanti Niketan, Bolpur. An admirer of his says. "Every morning at

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three—I know, for I have seen it—he sits immoveable in contemplation, and for two hours does not awake from his reverie upon the nature of God. His father, the Maharishi, would sometimes sit there all through the next day; once, upon a river he fell into contemplation because of the beauty of the lanscape and the rowers waited for eight hours before they could continue their journey." (Mr. Yeat's Introduction to Gitanjali.)

It is this contemplation of the beauty of nature in her most glorious manifestations and this retirement into the inner heaven that kindle poetic emotion. The modern hurry and pre-occupation with life's care and pleasure so characteristic of city life, have been fatal to poetic inspiration and are the real reasons of modern artistic sterility. Tagore's habits have been most helpful to him to keep in undimmed radiance the light of poesy given to him by God.

We know how Tagore composes his verses. " He hums his verses over to himself before setting them down in black and white. He takes considerable pains over composing the first line of a poem and the rest seems to flow withont any effort. He has no fixed hours for composing verses. During the rainy season, however, he finds his work more congenial than at any other time of the year. Mr. Tagore writes a very good hand and seldom corrects what he has once written. When he cannot help making some correction,

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he usually cuts the wrong word or sentence very lightly with a pencil or pen. Mr. Tagore is a most prolific writer, and if all his manuscripts were put together they would fill a small bookshelf." (A correspondent to the *Englishman*).

I have already referred to his burning patriotism. In his heart love of God and love of the motherland have fed each other's flame till we see the splendour of his love touching the night of our hearts with the glow of unselfishness and love and service as the eastern sky is touched with the crimson glories of the rising sun. It has been well said of him : "Here is a saint who is not afraid to be a saint, who dares to mingle with the commonest things of the world, and a poet the very closeness of whose contact with earth lifts him ever nearer to heaven."

It is interesting to know his impressions of the West. He was very much touched by the warmth of the reception that he had there. He has made many ardent and lasting friendships there. What impressed him most both in England and America was the spirit of social service. He said when interviewed by the Associated Press : "It was an inspiration to me." He was, however, pained to note that the English people knew very little about India and her hopes and aspirations. He pointed out how the devastating floods in Burdwan were hardly referred to in the English papers. He was also dissatisfied with, and even felt repelled by, "the love of

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luxury, the need of sensation, and craving for excitement," the mad scramble for the good things of life, the lack of repose, the glaring inequalities of wealth, and other evils afflicting the rich and progressive communities of the West. Mr. Rhys says: "When he spoke of the forces in the western world which he thought must become disruptive and lead to trouble, and stretched out his hands, it might have been the moral map of Europe, with its teeming incontinent and restless atoms, that lay spread out before him. The major energies, as he viewed them, were not constructive; they did not make for the world's commonwealth, and by their nature they must come into conflict sooner or later. Now, as I recall that afternoon not much more than a twelve-months ago —it is impossible not to see in the present war the grim realisation of those misgivings." It is the mission of great souls like Tagore to spread the empire of God's love and make us feel our common humanity and divinity. Mr. Rhys says: "A poet like Rabindranath Tagore is more powerful by his songs to-day than any would-be world dictator in strengthening the intercourse between east and west and giving to India her part and her voice in the commonality of nations." We may say to this child of God what he has said to the child in *The Crescent Moon.*

"They clamour and fight, they doubt and despair,
they know no end to their wranglings.

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Let your life come amongst them like a flame of light, my child, unflickering and pure, and delight them into silence.

They are cruel in their greed and envy, their words are like hidden knives thirsting for blood.

Go and stand amidst their scowling hearts, my child, and let your gentle eyes fall upon them like the forgiving peace of the evening over the strife of the day.

Let them see your face, my child, and thus know the meaning of all things; let them love you and thus love each other."

VII. Shantiniketan.

What shall we say of Shantiniketan where the great poet-saint dreams his dearest, truest, and sweetest dreams and serves his motherland in ways full of practical wisdom, insight, and love! The following song by Tagore is sung in chorus in Bengali by the boys of the Santiniketan school.

"Oh, The Shantiniketan, the darling of our hearts!
Our dreams are rocked in her arms,
Her face is fresh and fair to us for ever.

In the peace of her silent shadows we dwell, in the green of her fields.

Her mornings come and her evenings bringing down the caress of the sky;

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The stillness of her shady paths is thrilled by the whisper of the wood!

Heramalaki groves tremble with the rapture of rustling leaves.

She is within us and around, however far we wander.
The strings of our love are strung in her own deep tunes.
She weaves our hearts in a song making us one in music.''

Shantiniketan is full of peace and loveliness and it is said that "crowded with sal wood and far from the maddening crowd as it is, Bolpur is pre-eminently a poet's abode and a place of contemplation." The Rev. Mr. C. F. Andrews's poem on *The Palms at Shantiniketan* contained in his small volume of Poems entitled *The Motherland and other Poems* breathes the very spirit of the place.

" But when the low moon's rosy splendour
Rises along the darkling earth,
They wake to feel her lovelight tender
Stirring their leaves to new-born mirth.
Through the rapt hours they turn to greet her,
Queen of purple night above,
Straining their passionate arms to meet her
With the full ecstasy of love.
Faint, cold, and grey the lawn creeps o'er them,
Bathing with dew their fondage bare;
A white fog shrouds the land before them,
Ghost-like they stand in the still air
Sentinels set to watch the dawning
Silent and black against the sky.

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Till the full blaze of golden morning
    Circles with fire their foreheads high.
Now all on flame with arms up-lifted,
    Surging above the sleeping world,
Proudly wave, through the night-clouds rifted,
    Banners of dazzling light unfurled.
Then while the moon's enchantment holds them,
    Hushed, and the morning breezes cease,
A glory of azure haze enfolds them
    Veiled in a dream of endless peace.
Peace in the deep mid-air surrounding,
    Peace in the sky from pole to pole.
Peace to the far horizon bounding,
    Peace in the universal soul.
And peace at last to the restless longing,
    Which swept my life with tumult vain,
And stirred each gust of memory thronging
    Avenues dear of byegone pain.
Tossed to and fro I had sorely striven,
    Seeking, and finding no release;
Here by the palm trees came God-given
    Utter ineffable boundless peace."

But even more than its supreme outer loveliness, is the intellectual, moral and spiritual beauty of the fair fabric raised there by the loving hands of genius and patriotism. Tagore's idealism is happily combined with a keen vision for India's present and future needs and her coming glorious destiny. His love—deep and spiritual as it is—is made dynamic, focussed, and effective by his wisdom and insight. His father used to meditate under two *chatim* trees in Shantiniketan, and over

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the Maharshi's seat of meditation are lines in Bengali meaning:

> " He is
> The comfort of my life,
> The joy of my heart,
> The peace of my soul."

His son has combined meditation and practical, patriotic work there. The Maharshi created a lovely garden there and built a house and a temple of coloured glass, open to the light and air on all sides and paved with white marble, and also a school called the "Brahma-Vidyalaya." He directed that no image was to be worshipped there, and that no religion was to be decried. He gave it away as an endowment to all who desired to live there for meditation and communion with God. No animal food or spirituous liquors were to be taken in the *Asram*. The Maharshi was overjoyed to learn that Rabindranath Tagore was going to start a school at Bolpur.

The school is a noble one and is the pioneer of the schools which alone regenerated India is going to allow mould the minds of her children in the near future. There is a good deal of vain glory due to ignorance in the way in which modern university education is vaunted as a new and original thing in India. Ancient India knew much more about real university education, and used to make it a real instrument of culture of the soul, better than all the modern universities put together.

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It knew how to make nature co-operate with books and teaching in the blossoming of the young and pure human soul. It knew how to co-ordinate the courses of study so that the senses, the mind, the heart, the will, and the spirit were efficiently and harmoniously trained. The individual appeal in education was much more in it than in the juvenile barracks of modern times. Love played a greater and sweeter part in the relations between teachers and students than in modern times. The element purely intellectual did not obtain the same preponderance that it has in these vain glorious days. The forest universities (*asramas*) of the golden age of India, the universities of Nalanda and Taxila in the Buddhist age, the universities of Benares and Nuddea in the neo-Hindu age, and others fulfilled the highest aims of universities. Hioun Tsang thus describes the university of Nalanda;

> " All around, pools of translucent water shone with the open petal of blue lotus flowers. Here and there the lovely Kanaka trees hung down their red blossoms, and woods of dark mango trees, spread their shade between them. In the different courts the houses of the monks were each four storeys in height. The pavilions had pillars ornamented with dragons and beams resplendant with all the colours of the rainbow, rafters richly carved, columns ornamented with jade, painted red and richly chiselled, and balustrades

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of carved open work. The towers and buildings were built by six successive sovereigns. Through the windows of the tower one could see the waters of the Ganges. There were ten thousand students and fifteen hundred and ten professors at this university, receiving education, boarding, and medicines gratis. There were rich endowments to carry on this stupendous task. Arts and religion, philosophy and logic, grammar and literature, astronomy and medicine, and a host of other sciences were taught at this university."

Tagore has said in a recent article in Bengali : " We do not want nowadays temples of worship and outward rites and ceremonies, what we really want is an *asram*. We want a place where the beauty of nature and the noblest pursuits of man are in a sweet harmony. Our temple of worship is there, where outward nature and the human soul meet in union. Our only rites and ceremonies are self-sacrificing good works." The divine gift of education has been all along prized in this country.

अन्नदानात्परं नास्ति विद्यादानं ततः परं ।
अन्नात्क्षणिकातृप्तिः यावज्जीवं तु विद्यया ॥

(The gift of food is a supreme form of charity. But the gift of knowledge is even higher. The solace that food brings is fleeting : but the joy of learning lasts through life).

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In some quarters a wrong view is held that in the old *asrams* education was divorced from life. Mr. Rhys whose recent book on Tagore shows an imperfect sympathy with Indian ideals of art and life in many places and misses the ultimate beauties of Tagore's art, says : " Unlike the traditional guru or master of India's earlier days, while he believes in aspiration, he believes also that the will, purified in aspiring, should translate its faculty into the material and actual." To make this insinuation against those who watched the flame of learning with a jealous love through the disturbed centuries, who fostered and perfected the various arts and sciences and philosophies of India, whose forest-schools were not very far away from villages and towns where the *brahmacharis* had to beg for food, who devised a rational scheme of life in their *varnashrama dharma* by which the soul was slowly guided up the golden ladder of self-evolution by student life, by a life of social service as house-holder, by a life of self-discipline, and by a life of renunciation and love of God-argues an utter want of vision. No doubt the methods of education have to be altered from time to time consistently with the course of human evolution. But any one can see that the ideals of university education were lofty and noble in India, that we in spite of our vaunted greatness in these days have much to learn from it, and that the India of the future will not tolerate the present system—one-sided, inartistic, unhealthy, mercenary, loveless, and irreligious.

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Tagore's own school life was unhappy as pointed out already. He has been working for a higher type of teaching and a happier type of studentship. It is said in the *Englishman* : "His object in founding the school at Bolpur was to educate children in as agreeable a manner as possible." He desired that teachers should recognise that the boy is an imaginative being and had a soul. Mr. Havell says : "Perhaps the greatest fault to be found with our educational methods in India is in their lack of imagination. Following the traditions of the English public school, we have always regarded the schoolboy as an animal in which the imaginative faculties should be sternly repressed. Build a barrack in the heart of a dirty, overcrowded city, pack it with students, that is a college." (*Essays on Indian Art, Industry, and Education*). He says again : "There is no precedent in Europe for the squalid environment, the absence of all stimulus for the spiritual side of human nature, and the neglect of all that conduces to the brightness of school or college life such as we usually find about all Indian universities." Tagore has abolished the barbarous punishments of the older type of indigenous schools in modern India and the unimaginativeness, rigidity, irreligiousness, onesidedness, and lovelessness of the newer type of schools in modern India. It has been well said : "While he is inspired by Nationalism, he has not hesitated to turn to his purpose what he

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regards the best in English methods of instruction, and to profit by the experience of the West." Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe calls the Bolpur School "an example of modern methods united with the ancient Indian spirit of discipline and culture."

Tagore opened his School at Bolpur in 1901 with two or three boys only. In two years' time he had eighteen boys, and in four years he had sixty boys. There are now nearly two hundred boys at Shanti Niketan. 'Trust the boy and let him grow' which is the secret of the greatest of modern systems of education—Montessori's and others—and which was the secret of education in ancient India is Tagore's motto. The Medium of instruction is Bengali. The school routine is very interesting to learn. At 4-30 A.M. "a choir of boys go round the school singing songs and rouse the sleepers up into the beauty and calm of early dawn." The boys then clean their room and are thus initiated early in life and in a practical manner into the idea that manual work is in no way undignified and that service is the sweetest thing in life, if done in a spirit of renunciation and love of God. They then go through physical exercises in the open air, bathe, and meditate for a quarter of an hour. Then the gong sounds, and the boys "go reverently in procession into the school temple." The boys have classes from 7 to 10 in the morning after breakfast, and 2 to 5 in the afternoon, and not during the unsuitable noon

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hours as in modern schools. All classes are held under the shade of trees when the weather is fine. The class is generally limited to fifteen boys. The boys have their dinner at 12 o'clock. The boys have games after lunch. The time between the end of games and the hour of evening meal is used to tell stories to boys and to initiate them in acting and music. The elder boys go to the neighbouring villages and hold evening classes there to teach the village lads. They do practical social service while in other places the students hear lectures on social service by glib speakers with cheap eloquence and form social service brotherhoods and go to sleep over them. "After the day's work they retire to bed at half-past nine, and a choir of boys again goes round the school singing evening songs. They begin their days with songs and they end them with songs." It has been well said: "It is a Sight for the gods to see how the teachers and the boys get into ecstatic raptures when they repeat the songs of the greatest of the Indian poets in praise of the motherland and the Shantiniketan."

I shall quote here below the *mantras* that the boys chant in unison in the morning and the evening.

THE MANTRAS OF THE MORNING.

I. Thou art our Father. May we know Thee as our Father. Strike us not. May we truly bow to Thee.

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II. O Lord! O Father! Take away all our sins and give us that which is good.

We bow to Him in whom is the happiness.
We bow to Him in whom is the good.
We bow to Him from whom comes the happiness.
We bow to Him from whom comes the good.
We bow to Him who is the good.
We bow to Him who is the highest good.
Shantih! Shantih! Shantih! Hari om.

THE MANTRA OF THE EVENING.

The God who is in fire, who is in water,
Who interpenetrates the whole world,
Who is in herbs, who is in trees, to that God
I bow down again and again.

The teachers are quite happy. There is no head-master; the teachers are placed on an equal footing and divide the work among themselves. They elect a head master once a year. They are on intimate and loving terms with the pupils. There is divine service twice a week at the *Mandir*, and it is conducted by Tagore when he is there and by the teachers in his absence. Corporal punishment of any description is absolutely forbidden. Discipline is enforced and punishment meted out by captains and courts of school justice elected and constituted every month by the boys. Further, in this republic of boys there are no rewards or prizes. During the holidays the teachers and the boys arrange and go on excursions to various places. Tagore is

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very fond of the boys. He says: "I am far happier with them than anywhere else." It is said: "The boys call him Gurudu, which means the revered master. He takes no active part in the daily routine of the school, although sometimes he takes classes in literature and singing, and encourages the boys to bring him their efforts at original work in painting, drawing, and poetry. He often spoke to them with enthusiasm and hopefulness of their original work and of the pleasure he felt when they carried their first-fruits to him. In every branch of art he is their inspirer; at the end of each term the boys in general produce and act one of his plays. He himself joins them and takes a part in the play, whatever it may be. When lately the *King of the Dark Chamber* was produced by the school, he took the part of the king, and his superb rendering of it will long be remembered by those who acted with him and by those who witnessed it." Mr. Bose says: "His great personality silently permeates the whole atmosphere of the school and inspires every member of the institution with the divinity and nobility of his character." Again, besides telling them the highest ideals of life and conduct once a week in the *Mandir*, he holds special celebrations there on the anniversary of the founding of the school, the New year's day, and the various *Jayanthis* (anniversaries) in connection with the great spiritual teachers of mankind. He called himself "a humble

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schoolmaster" when the Calcutta citizens met to give him a grand reception after his tour in the West.

The following description taken from the *Jaina Gazette* for 1915 is valuable as dispelling some possible doubts. "The cooks are all brahmins, the diet is purely vegetarian, or lacto-vegetarian, as it may more accurately speaking be called, and the meals are served out in separate rows. Brahmoism is never preached among the boys. The principles of religion acknowledged by all sections of the Hindu community are taught to the boys. Some of the sermons delivered by Rabindranath Tagore have been collected together in fourteen small volumes under the title of Shantiniketan." Again, the boys are taught Sanscrit, Bengali, English, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, and Nature study and may be prepared for the Matriculation Examination. Classes in agriculture and manual work, such as carpentry, etc., are to be opened soon there.

I cannot conclude this description of *Shantiniketan* and the new formative forces working there for India's uplift better than by quoting two passages from Mr. J. Ramsay MacDodanald's description of the school contributed to the *Daily Chronicle*.

> "It is difficult to explain the feelings which possess one who goes to such institutions. They have nothing to do with Government; their staff is not official; their system is not an enforced

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mechanical routine. At the Shantiniketan they complained that when their boys reached the University Matriculation Standard, educational methods had to be adopted which the teachers regretted. These schools are native to the soil like the trees which grow out of it. They are therefore not incongruous, and a lack of incongruity must surely be a test imposed upon every national system of education. Here India leans upon herself and issues from herself. There is no attempt made to impose something foreign, to uproot or to force, no necessity to guard alien methods by alien instructors. The teachers are Indian, Indian in their habits, in their sympathies, in their dress. Government aid has been refused, because the conditions under which it would be given could not be acceptable. 'They would have made my boys sit on benches' said Mr. Tagore with a quiet smile, 'whereas, I think it far better that they should sit on mats under the trees.'...It (the school) has been kept at the cost of much sacrifice. Into its exchequer Mr. Tagore has put not only the Nobel prize, but the royalties on his books."

"Moreover, the Shantiniketan is no mere seminary for the education of boys. It is alive with the life of India. It is aware of what is going on outside. It shares in the larger Indian life. The

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particular interest of the school at the moment is the enlightenment of the masses. They asked me to speak to the boys, and I inquired as to the subjects. 'Tell us' they said, 'how the masses may be instructed.' They had really been answering me that question themselves and showing me in practice how to do it. For under the trees I had seen an interesting sight. The villages around are inhabited by the original Santals and the boys of the school go out sometimes with football or bat and begin a game. When a crowd has gathered the game is stopped and the players talk of knowledge to the villagers. From this an evening class is formed and the Shantiniketan boys go out and teach in it. The day I was there about a dozen of these children had come in and were being taught under a tree. They were lively imps with wide interested eyes and so full of life that they could not keep still. They were being shown the delights of the stereoscope and were being taught to describe accurately what they saw. Two boys were looking after them. It was their tribute to India and their services to the reincarnated motherland to which all their youthful enthusiasm was devoted. I left them sitting class by class on their little mats under the 'chatim' trees, their books by their side, and their teachers in their midst. They

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smiled and chatted as I passed. Everything was peaceful, natural, happy. And I went into another world where worthy and well-meaning graduates from Oxford and Cambridge are toiling and perspiring like blacksmiths with heavy hammers to beat and bend the Indian mind into strange forms on strange anvils, and where there is unhappiness and sadness of heart, timorous whispers instead of laughter, doubt instead of hope".

VIII. Tagore's Insight into Indian Ideals.

I have said enough above to show what real and deep insight Tagore has got into Indian ideals of the life of art and the art of life. I shall deal more fully hereafter with the fundamental traits of Tagore's art and shall hence attempt here only to show how his highest ideas are in harmony with the highest Indian ideals. His articles on *My Interpretation of Indian History*, translated from his Bengali articles and published in the August and September issues of the *Modern Review* in 1913, show how thoroughly he has realised India's fundamental ideal. He says there: "India always seeks for the one amidst many; her endeavour is to concentrate the diverse and scattered in one and not to diffuse herself over many." He recognised how this deep spiritual truth has been the inspiration of Indian life, poetry, and art. The beautiful universe that we see is only an

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imperfect manifestation of Him who is infinite beauty and love. The search for the unity through the gates of love and wisdom is the only true joy and duty of each human soul. Tagore realised this great truth which is the basis of all his other ideas. Art and literature should seek to symbolise and express this infinity and unity. The artist should portray the ideal world of true and higher reality. Such are the leadings Indian ideas in the realm of art. Burne-Jones has expressed well his ideal of art and his words beautifully describe the Indian ideals of art. "Realism ? Direct transcript from Nature? I suppose by the time the 'photographic artist' can give us all the colours as correctly as the shapes, people will begin to find out that the realism they talk about isn't art at all, but science; interesting, no doubt, as a scientific achievement, but nothing more ....Transcripts from Nature ? what do I want with transcripts? I prefer her own signature; I don't want forgeries more or less skilful.........It is the message, the 'burden' of a picture that makes its real value." He says again: "You see, it is these things of the soul that are real.........the only real things in the universe".

This is the reason why the greatest rhetorician of India, Mammata, has said :

नियतिकृत नियमरहितां ह्लादैकमयीं अनन्यपरतन्त्रां ।
नवरसरुचिरां निर्मितिं आदधती भारतीकवेर्जयति ॥

(The poet's speech creates a world which is not

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fettered by the laws of destiny and which need not be a mere counterpart or imitation of the created world, which is of the very essence of joy, which is self-existent and not dependent on anything else, and which is made beautiful by the nine rasas or emotions).

He then describes the pleasure produced by art in these eloquent terms :

सकलप्रयोजनमौलिभूतं समनन्तरमेव रसास्वादन स मुद्भूतं विगलितवेद्यानन्तरं आनन्दं ।

(Pleasure, which is the crown and glory of life's purposes, which is produced by the immediate enjoyment of *rasa*, and which so fills the mind that for the time being one is aware of nothing else).

The peculiar glory of India's thought is her combination of the doctrine of the Infinite Absolute Godhead and that of Divine Incarnation, thus linking in one golden chain the Infinite and the Finite, God and the Universe,—and her combination of the doctrines of *Karma* and that of *Moksha* (liberation) thus linking the past, present, and future and showing their interdependence, while making us realise how the human soul free in its nature can soar above all limitations and dwell in the inner heaven of bliss for ever. Hence it is that in Indian literature and art we see infinite representations of God in innumerable finite forms. In Tagore's beautiful words : "The breach between the finite and the infinite fills with love and overflows"—

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(Tagore's *Sadhana*, page 43). Okakura says: "Any Indian man or woman will worship at the feet of some inspired wayfarer who tells them that there can be no image of God, that the world itself is a limitation, and go straightway, as the natural consequence, to pour water on the head of the *Sivalingam*." (Ideals of the East, page 651). Image worship is recognised as a golden ladder by which alone we can, and should, ascend to the empyrean of Love. Hence in India art suggests ideal forms in terms of the appearances of the phenomenal word. It adopts symbolism to suggest the inexpressible in terms of visible beauty in nature and in the human form. Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy says: "India is wont to suggest the eternal and inexpressible in terms of sensuous beauty. The love of man for woman or for nature is one with his love of God. Nothing is common or unclean. All life is a sacrament, no part of it more so than another, and there is no part of it that may not symbolise eternal and infinite things. In this great same-sightedness the opportunity for art is great. But in this religious art it must not be forgotten that life is not to be represented for its own sake but for the sake of theDivine expressed in and through it." Again, Indian art is not sombre or pessimistic. It is essentially joyous. No fears of an eternal hell or extinction or annihilation have tortured the Indian mind and embittered the life of the soul. Dispassion, detachment, wisdom, love, and union are

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the steps by which the Indian mind rose into the raptures of the infinite love and beauty,

"The Light whose smile kindles the universe,
The Beauty in which all things live and move."

But Indian art, though it is essentially joyous, does not lack seriousness.

"She comes like the hushed beauty of the night
That looks too deep for laughter;
Her eyes are a reverberation and a light
From worlds before and after."

The literature and art that have lovingly portrayed Krishna are perfect illustrations of what I have said above. They depend for their appeal to the suggestions of His infinite beauty and love; they are essentially joyous; and they are serious in tone and treatment. The medium of sex-love is adopted as a prism through which the white light of God's love is refracted into many-tinted glowing colours. Love is the divinest thing in this imperfect life. Hence it is taken to symbolise God's love. In the worship of Devi the mother's love is taken as the symbol. Artistic imagination and spiritual rapture have always gone hand in hand in India like lover and beloved united in a holy wedlock to lay the offering of the flowers of the heart before the holy shrine of God's love.

I have shown above the relation between India's spiritual ideals and the arts of poetry, painting, and sculpture. In the realm of the arts of architecture and

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music and dancing the same relation is visible equally well. The *gopurams* of South India broad-based on the earth and soaring into the sky in a passion of longing and aspiration show this in a manner that does not admit of doubt or dispute. The art of music is in India in close relation to emotional states. Being free from the trammels of canvas or marble or words and having as its medium the wonderful human voice which is capable of infinite modulations, it is the most perfect instrument of self-expression. All the characteristics of Indian art in general are to be found in it. Mrs. Mann says: "I am often told that all Indian music is melancholy. How can I convey to you that spirit which is sad yet without pain? That is the delicious melancholy of Indian music. Can a lover be joyful away from his beloved? Can a musician sing joyfully, 'really' joyfully, whilst he wanders on this earth? Would it not be sorrow if he forgot his exile? Is not the remembrance of the face of the beloved more dear, though fraught with the pain of separation?"

The great Indian poet quoted by Srimathi Indira Devi is said to have remarked:

> "The world by day is like European Music,—a flowing concourse of vast harmony, composed of concord and discord, and many disconnected fragments. And the night world is our Indian music—one pure, deep, and tender "*ragini*."

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They both stir us, yet the two are contrary in spirit. But that cannot be helped. At the root, nature is divided into day and night, unity and variety, finite and infinite. We men of India live in the realm of night – we are overpowered by the sense of the One and Infinite. Our music draws the listener away beyond the limits of everyday human joys and sorrows, and takes us to that lonely region of the soul which lies beyond the phenomenal universe, while European music leads us a variegated dance through the endless rise and fall of human grief and joy."

In the case of the much misunderstood and much abused art of dancing also the same fundamental art-ideas of India are clearly seen. Dancing is not mere refined and graceful gesture or 'the passionate posturing born of a passing mood.' It is the idealisation of love to express God's love, and it uses as instrument not merely the hand or the voice or the mind of the artist but all of them and also the human body which becomes so expressive as to seem that it itself thinks and feels and rejoices. The modern dislike of the art being in the hands of dancing girls has been extended to the art itself. But as a matter of fact it is the art that has undergone a kind of vicarious punishment, because the dancing girls are very much in evidence, only dancing being dead. Thus every art in India

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is permeated and transfigured and sublimated by the highest spiritual conceptions of the Indian mind.

I shall show below—and specially when dealing with *Gitanjali*, *Gardener*, and *Sadhana* how admirably Tagore has realised and expressed the highest Indian ideals of art as transfigured by the fundamental conception of unity and infinity proclaimed by India to the world.

Tagore's insight into Indian ideals of life and love is no less deep than his insight into the Indian ideals of art. Life is conceived of as a sacrament in India.; life should be praised and adored, not despised, because it is through life that we can rise to God ; and the gift of life by God to the souls waiting to reach His lotus feet is regarded as an act of mercy to souls that otherwise would remain in the hell of separation from Him, for what hell is deeper or more fearful than banishment from the beauty of His face ? The seeming pessimism in India is only an expression of impatience at the slowness of the arrival of the dawn of God's love in our hearts and at the innumerable obstacles to its coming placed by our own innumerable evil acts in innumerable past lives. The belief in the soul's infinite energies and in the infiniteness of God's mercy and love is shining like a rainbow on the cloud of human sorrow—lit up in its magnificent opulence of colour and glory by the unseen sun of God's grace, reaching down almost to the earth of our ordinary life, and looking like a heavenly bridge over

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which we can pass away into the beyond, into peace, into love, into joy.

The Indian ideal of love also is spiritualised by the fundamental conception of the Indian mind. The Indian poets describe not merely the early blossoming of love in youth when love comes like a prince to his throne in the human heart, but also the infinite tenderness and spirit of self-sacrifice that animates the human soul and leads it even to lay down life if only it can win for the beloved a moment's joy or save the beloved from a moment's pain. The stories of Savitri, Sita, Damayanthi, Droupadi, Radha, and others show this in an unmistakable manner, and have influenced art and life in India in such a way that grace would depart from life if we banish them from our hearts—nay, our existence as a great race would become impossible if they do not act as a daily inspiration in our lives.

Tagore has shown his realisation of these ideals in many of his works—especially in the *Chitra*, and the *King of the Dark Chamber*. I shall deal with these later on.. I shall quote here only one passage from his article on *Kalidasa the Moralist*.

> "The love that is self-controlled and friendly to general society, which does not ignore any one, great or small, kindred or stranger, around itself —the love which, while placing the loved one in its centre, diffuses its sweet graciousness within the circle of the entire universe—has a permanence

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unassailable by God or man. But the passion which asserts itself as the disturber of a hermit's meditations, as the enemy of a householder's social duties,—such a passion always destroys others like a whirlwind, but it also carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction............... Where two hearts are made one by virtue, there love is not antagonistic to anything in the universe. It is only when Cupid stirs up a revolt against virtue that tumult begins, then love loses constancy, and beauty loses peace. When love occupies its proper place in subordination to virtue, it contributes its special element towards perfection, it does not destroy symmetry; because virtue is nothing but harmony—it preserves beauty, it preserves goodness, and by wedding the two together it gives a delicious completeness to both."

IX. Tagore's Conception of Art.

I have discussed this subject with considerable fulness when dealing below with three of Tagore's greatest works—*Gitanjali*, *Gardener*, and *Sadhana*. I shall hence make here only a few introductory observations to show what have been Tagore's leading conceptions as to art, its place in life, its dignity, and its relation to God.

According to him love for God is the real glory of life, and art is valuable as the gate of beauty, through

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which we can enter the innermost shrine of the Infinite. He says:

> "My song has put off her adornments, she has no pride of dress or decoration. Ornaments would mar our union; they would come between thee and me; their jingling would drown thy whispers."
>
> (*Gitanjali*, page 6).

He is full of humility but yet he realises the greatness and dignity of a poet's function in life. He says:

> "I touch by the edge of the far-spreading wing of my song thy feet which I could never aspire to reach."
>
> (*Gitanjali*, page 2).

At the same time, he says that a poet's dedicated life is great, because it is acceptable to God and God's grace is upon it.

> "Thus, my songs share their seats in the heart of the world with the music of the cloud and forests.
>
> But, you man of riches, your wealth has no part in the simple grandeur of the sun's glad gold and the mellow gleam of the musing moon.
>
> The blessing of the all-embracing sky is not shed upon it.
>
> And when death appears, it pales and withers and crumbles into dust."
>
> (*Gardener*, page 129).

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Tagore has realised and said that art is the speaking of God's voice through our soul.

> "Thy word is weaving words in my mind and Thy joy is adding music to them. Thou givest Thyself to me in love and then feelest thine own entire sweetness in me."
>
> (*Gitanjali*, page 61).

Tagore's views on the dramatic art are well-known. He is no admirer of the modern attempt at making scenic representation usurp the place of imagination. Sir Sidney Lee has said : "The deliberate pursuit of scenic realism is antagonistic to the ultimate law of dramatic art....Dramatic illusion must ultimately spring from the active and unrestricted exercise of the imaginative faculty by author, actor, and audience in joint partnership." (*Shakespeare and the Modern Stage.*). Tagore also says in his article on *The Stage* : "Any one of the arts is only to be seen in her full glory when she is sole mistress......We all act to ourselves as we read a play, and the play which cannot be sufficiently interpreted by such invisible acting has never yet gained the laurel for its author." The same idea is seen also in the the footnote appearing in his 'Chitra.' He did not like any art being corrupted by constantly trying to borrow unborrowable effects from other arts. Music overweighted with words, poetry merely melodious, oversymbolical painting, and sculpture seeking to express movement, miss their true purpose and glory. He has

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said in another place: "If the Hindu spectator has not been too far infected with the greed for realism and the Hindu artist still has any respect for his craft and his skill, the best thing they can do for themselves is to regain their freedom by making a clean sweep of the costly rubbish that has accumulated round about and is clogging the stage."

Tagore's views on music are equally beautiful. His passionate love of music is clear from *Gitanjali* and *Gardener.* In the *Chitra* he says :

> "A limitless life of glory can bloom and spend itself in a morning,
>
> Like an endless meaning in the narrow span of a song."

Pandit Sita Nath Tatwabhushan says that Tagore "may be said to be the leading musical composer of the day" (*History of Brahmoism*). That music is "a world-language" is clear to us when we see how four of Tagore's songs in *Gitanjali* have been set to music by Landon Ronald, one of the foremost musicians of England and Principal of the Guildhall School of music. The four songs above said are the sixth, twenty-sixth, thirty-eighth, and fifty-seventh songs in *Gitanjali.* We learn also that selections from *Gitanjali* are to be found in a book of songs composed by Mr. John Alden Carpenter.

Tagore points out how Indian music has the charm, restfulness, and peace of Infinity, and is in intimate

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alliance with religion and expresses the deepest aspirations, longings, and raptures of the heart.

> " European music is, so to speak, mixed with the actualities of life. Our music, as it were, moves above the incidents of daily life, and because of it is so full of detachment and tenderness--as if it were appointed to reveal the beauty of the innermost and unutterable mystery of the human heart and of the world."
>
> Tagore's *Music of East and West.*

Again, ' Our songs speak of the early dawn and the starry midnight sky of India. Our music breathes of dripping rain, and the wordless ecstasy of the new spring as it reaches the utmost depths of the forests."

He points out how European music is romantic and says that " the European wants his truth concrete."

> " The romantic tendencies are those of variety and superfluity, the billows of the ocean of life, the reflection of the conflict of light and shade over restless movement, though in another direction there is a broad expanse which has all the stillness of the blue of the sky, and is an intimation of the infinite upon the far horizon............It (European music), translates the multifariousness of human life into the sounds of music.''
>
> Tagore's *Music of East and West*

Tagore points out that the essential sweetness of a song is in its evolution of sound and not in its words.

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"The art of music has its own nature and special function. Though there are words in a song, still they ought not to count for more than the song itself; they are only its vehicle. Song is glorious in its own right; why should it accept the slavery of words? Song begins where words end. The inexplicable is the domain of music. It can say what words cannot, so that the less the words of the song disturb the song, the better."

Tagore's *Music of East and West*

X. LEADING TRAITS OF TAGORE'S ART.

I am considering in the succeeding chapters at great length and in considerable detail the traits of Tagore's art as revealed in each of his works. I shall deal here only with the general aspects of his art.

The first thing that we must bear in mind in regard to Tagore's art is that he voices the East in a new, powerful, and fascinating manner. The significance of his unparalleled reception in the West is unmistakable. Mr. L. March Phillips said in the *Morning Post* in 1913: "The significance of this reception which an Eastern mystic has received at our hands is that it shows, as so many signs now-a days show, that the mind of Europe is in touch with the mind of the East. Whenever that has happened before, the effect on Western thought has

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always been considerable. In particular one effect which this contact has always had has been to spiritualise, so to speak, the Western consciousness and to render susceptible to an order of ideas more abstract and emotional than the matter of fact Western intelligence is usually willing to entertain." The Western mind has been more practical and rationalistic than the mind of the East, and it has elaborated a rationalistic interpretation of the universe. Mr. March Phillips says: "We cannot look to intellect to save us from the tyranny of intellect. It is a question rather of bringing another faculty into play, a faculty having for its subject-matter that very order of ideas which intellect is incapable of grappling with." Though he has failed to understand how far Tagore is a faithful interpreter of the mind of India, he has well said: "Many long centuries ago there woke in the heart of India the thought she has been dreaming over ever since, the thought that the spiritual being in a man, his soul as we say, was no mere precious cargo to be safely conveyed across the engulfing waves of time to the harbour of eternity, but an inward source of perception and knowledge, an active illuminating agent bringing light and certitude into the mind, just as in Western philosophy the reason brings light and certitude into the mind. Hindu thought, in a word, sets up another faculty against reason, a faculty whose function it is to deal with spiritual things just as it is the function of

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intellect to deal with material things." I shall discuss this matter more fully below when dealing with Tagore's mysticism.

As I intend to deal in the next section at some length with Tagore's style, I shall state here only the leading traits of the matter of Tagore's art. The first trait that we must never fail to realise and remember is the fact that Tagore's poems have a conspicuous note of individualism, idealism, and romanticism. The expression of subjective moods in obedience to the laws of poetic beauty and in a romantic spirits, is the greatest and most abiding charm of his poems. The words 'classical' and 'romantic' are often used without their full import being known. 'Classic' implies moderation, measure, balance, proportion, emotion used as means to an end, expression of emotion according to fixed canons of art. 'Romantic' implies a divine unrest seeking a higher and heavenlier peace, measureless aspiration, profusion of adornment even at the risk of disobeying the laws of balance and proportion, emotion being an end in itself, expression of emotion according to the laws of the soul as opposed to outer canons of art. The peculiarities of the classical spirit were partly due to the peculiar elements of the Greek polity which regarded citizenship as the highest function of life and laid no stress on the immense and eternal value and destiny of each individual as soul. A regulated and self-controlled life in service of the state

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was the Greek ideal. Christianity gave a wonderful extension and beauty to pre-existing conceptions of the individual soul by showing its divine origin and destiny and its immortality. Monsieur Royer-Collard says : " Human societies are born, live and die, on the earth ; it is there that their destinies are accomplished. . . . . . But they contain not the whole man. After he has engaged himself to society there remains to him the noblest part of himself, those high faculties by which he elevates himself to God, to a future life, to unknown felicity in an invisible world. We, persons individual and identical, veritable beings endowed with immortality, we have a different destiny from that of states." This difference of ideal resulted in a difference in the expression of the ideal in art. The Parthenon is as different from a Gothic Cathedral as the one ideal is from the other. The regularity of design, the proportion of parts, and the moderation of ornamentation in the one are as remarkable as the sky-piercing spires, the stained-glass windows, and the profusion of adornment in the other. The Indian ideal has struck an even higher note of individualism, idealism, and romanticism. Tagore is one of its greatest voices for all times, and is certainly its greatest voice in this age. His immense popularity in the west is due in a large measure to the fact that, in a realistic, prosaic, and critical age, his idealistic, poetic, and creative note has come almost like a new revelation.

In the wonderful work of Tagore, there is another

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great trait to be noted. His epoch corresponds in a measure to the period of what has been called *The Renaiscence of wonder* in England when Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and others led the revolt against formalism and went back to the age of beauty by jumping over what they regarded as the dark ages in the history of art. In India also the rules of art that were framed to direct and regulate the flow of the stream of inspiration with true fertilising power and effect eventually dammed up the flow altogether. The canons that were meant to be the guides of the spirit of Art became its gaolers. The great Vaishnava saints and poets and musicians effected a deliverance of the human spirit both in the religious and artistic spheres. With the decay of the religion of love, the reassertion of the reign of rules began. Tagore has gone back to the age of the great Vaishnava movement and has effected a revolution in the realm of taste by so going back to the age of beauty, freedom, love, and rapture. He has revived and re-kindled our sense of the wonder of things, our perception of the beauty and grace and love of God. We can have a full and adequate conception of the great transformation only when the work of the poets, singers, artists, philosophers, sages, and saints of this era of the *Renaiscence of wonder* is summed up once for all in luminous words by an Indian Ruskin whose heart is full of purity and peace, whose soul is full of love for his motherland and for God, and whose lips have been touched by heavenly

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fire and hence utter the highest truths in a golden style for the greater joy of man and the greater glory of God.

A third feature to be noticed in regard to Tagore's Art is that it is thoroughly national. Literature and art are the revelation and self-expression of the highest and most distinctive elements of the genius of a race. Dr. A. K. Coomaraswami says : "There is no more searching test of the vitality of a people than the revelation in art—plastic, literary, musical,—of their inward being. A national art is a self-revelation where no concealment is possible." Posnett says in his valuable book on *Comparative Literature* : "National literature is an outcome of national life, a spiritual bond of national unity, such as no amount of eclectic study or cosmopolitan science can supply. National literatures, then, require a vigorous and continuous national life." Not all paper imitations of all the most beautiful flowers of the world can compare for a moment with a single beautiful blossom rooted in the soil, lifting its fair face to the sky, and sending the fragrance of its soul far and wide. If there is one fact that is perfectly well demonstrated in the history of art, it is the failure of all adapted styles. This is a truth which many of our countrymen have not yet learnt. Their modern novels and adaptations of western plays show in many cases an utter lack of vision for the national genius. Time with its relentless hand will sweep away all this rub-

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bish as so much waste paper. To modify a great passage of poetry,

> " The sword of Time is not in haste to smite
> Nor yet doth linger."

Mr. K. C. Chatterji says about *Modern Bengali Fiction* : " The recent Bengali fiction has been more realistic than romantic in its structure. But....though the possibilities of romance have increased, the Bengali stand-point has changed, and the market is being daily flooded with fourth and fifth rate realistic novels." In South India also the plays and poems and novels published recently are either divorced from real life altogether and have a thin emasculated existence, or are crude adaptations of western works, or display a hideous realism, or are written not to interpret life creatively but as a literary aid to the various platform agitators who seek to change Hindu Society out of shape. In Bengal the reaction from formalism was Brahmoism which neither understood nor cared to understand Hindu ideals of life and Hindu ideals of art. Mr. Ajit Kumar Chakrabarti says : " But in its extreme zeal, it cut itself away from the traditions and culture of the Hindu race. Hence, its deprivation of Hindu art and symbolism, Hindu catholicity and comprehension, was a serious loss." He says in regard to both the old formalism and the new protestantism : " Both fail to give the fullest scope to the vital energies of the soul. In the shade of their chilling and

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cramping atmosphere, one cannot think that the flower of an opening life, the life of the child of the nation, will expand. Its sunshine is robbed, its joy is robbed, its very honey is robbed, and everywhere surrounding its life there is the gloom of overhanging conventions, which dictate, thou shalt do this and thou shalt not do that. Soul-growth is impossible in such an environment of unnatural restraint." In South India also, the horrors of the protestant movement in Bengal are being repeated in the sphere of life and the sphere of art. The social agitator holds the reins and society is invited to sit in his car of foreign make and be whirled away God knows where. Literature and art are sought to be seduced by him, and must necessarily soon lament their exile in the Sahara of the new inner life. The greatness of Tagore lies in the fact that his richly endowed mind so full of love for the past, so full of practical wisdom in the present, and so full of indomitable hopes for the future, has effected a reconciliation between the great creative and devotional age in the past and the critical and lovelesss present age. He has avoided the Scylla and the Charybdis of formalism and protestantism and has emerged into the ocean of true national life over which the sun of glory and the moon of love shed their radiance and the balmy airs of artistic inspiration blow bearing coolness and fragrance to the weary world. India has ever been famous for her combination of idealism of vision and practi-

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cal energy. Tagore has effected such a combination in his life and his art. His style and art are a natural development out of India's literary past, and this harmony is only a part of the unique harmony of the soul and its faculties that is Tagore's most unique and admirable inner endowment.

One of the chief and most charming traits of Tagore's art is his simplicity and spontaneity. There is a peculiar bird-like quality in his music and a child-like sweetness in his outlook upon life. Mr. Yeats says in his introduction to *Gitanjali* : "An innocence, a simplicity that one does not find elsewhere in literature makes the birds and the leaves seem as near to him as they are near to children, and the changes of the seasons great events as before our thoughts had arisen between them and us". It is in *The Crescent Moon* even more than in his other poems that this rare quality is seen in the fulness of its heavenly charm. The Rev. Mr. Andrews says : "There is nothing probably in the whole range of literature which tests more searchingly the pure spontaneity of the poet than the writing of the poetry of child-hood............It must, indeed, possess to the full this joyous rhythm of the visible world with all its play of colour and light, of music and dance and song. But it must also soar beyond into the unseen silent abode of the spirit's birth. It must be fresh with the dews of the first child-hood of the world, but it must also be old with the mystery of

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life itself and tenderly touched by the passing shadow of death." The poetry must express the deep wonder that shines in the child's eyes, the dazzling play of colour that it likes, the realm of imagination where it lives in endless delight, and the heaven of purity, innocence, trustfulness and love in its heart. As the Rev. Mr. Andrews says : "Like a rainbow of many colours the book shines. The dark purple of death is blended with the golden beams of life. The playful lisping of the child at school is made one with the silent glory of the stars."

Another great trait of Tagore's poetry is his expression of the universal elements of life—life, child-hood, the raptures of love, death, the joy of nature, the destiny of man, love of God—themes that are as old as the world and as new as each day's golden dawn. The Rev. Mr. C. F. Andrews says in his article on "With Rabindra in England." . "Just as the play of dazzling sunlight was a joy to him which he was never tired of watching, so the dazzling variety of the play of human life was to him an unending wonder and delight.........
............Rabindra appears to arrive at the universal, not like Shakespeare by many different roads, but always by the one pathway of simplicity. The simplest human affections, the child-heart of the young and innocent, the simplest domestic joys and sorrows, the purest and simplest yearnings of the soul for god,—these go to form the unity towards which Rabin-

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dra's poetic utterance is striving." The dawn time radiance of the child-nature is to be seen in the *Crescent Moon* ; the noontide splendour of love in the human heart with its revelation of rapture and radiance and its fruitful power is seen in the *Gardener* ; and "the hues and harmonies of evening" and the overwhelming solemnity and mystery of the night with God's gospel writ in stars in the sapphire sky are seen in the *Gitanjali*. The primary affections and emotions and joys and sorrows are depicted in the *Short Stories*. His plays suggest divinely beautiful solutions of the problem of the soul its nature, and its destiny.

We must note also another beautiful characteristic of Tagore, his being a poet of the people. He has a thinly veiled contempt for all pomp of authority and glitter of power, as *which* deeply religious nature has not-knowing as it all does that it rests in the Almighty, and knowing also that.

> " Man, proud man
> Drest in a little brief authority,—
> Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
> His glassy essence,—like an angry ape,
> Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven,
> As make the angels weep."

(Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*.)

Tagore knows that there is more love, tenderness, humanity, heroism, and piety in the so-called lower

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classes than the so-called higher classes. He makes us realise how

> "The mind's internal heaven will diffuse
> The dews of inspiration on the humblest lay."

In his *Short Stories* the heroes and heroines are drawn from humble life and their simple joys and griefs and longings and ideals are presented to us with insight and love. The same sweet note is heard in his poems also. He sees the gracious presence of God amidst the toiling millions who in their unknown heroism build up this fair fabric of love that is known as human society. The great cities and works of art that we see and admire are not so much built of stones and wood as of life and love. They represent so much expenditure of soul-force in a passion of glad giving for the sake of God. Communal life is not mere juxtaposition of individuals for mutual convenience but is due to the unifying power of love. Tagore says in *Gitanjali*: "Here is thy foot-stool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest and lowliest and lost. When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost. Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest and lowliest, and lost. My heart can never find its way to where thou keepest company with the companionless among the poorest, the lowliest, and the lost." I have already referred to the social service work of the Shantineketan boys.

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It is said that in the enveloping and embosoming atmosphere of love at Shantiniketan even the so-called "impossible and hopeless" children grow into normal human beings as they are found to do in Montessori's institution. It is the want of love and of realisation of the divinity of life that wrecks all social service schemes devised by the boastful social workers who launch such schemes having one eye on the leading newspapers of the day. Tagore's deep love of the poor, toiling, dumb millions has achieved the double glory of the sweetest artistic expression and practical fruitfulness, and in this respect even more than in anything else he is the king of the Indian Renaissance.

Tagore's combination of intense patriotism with his universal love is one of the most noteworthy traits in his genius. The patriotism that like the pseudo-patriotism now prevalent in some western countries seeks to advance the interests of the country any by means fair or foul even if thereby other lands are ruined, is a grave menace to refinement and true civilisation; while the "universal" love that talks glibly of universal brotherhood while having no real feeling, that ignores the fact that different races have peculiar gifts and functions, that seeks to reduce all to one dull level of uniformity, and that dwells in a fool's paradise of its own is an index of utter weakness and imbecility. The fruits of each civilisation and type of culture may be enjoyed by the

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whole world ; but the most fragrant native blossom of any type of culture cannot bear a moment's transplantation and will die if we handle it roughly or remove it from the plant that gives it life. I have already shown how Tagore has been one of the greatest formative influences of the new era, how he is the greatest singer of India's national songs, how he is the greatest leader and poet of the Indian Renaissance, how his potriotism is bent on combining the glories of the past with the new scientific and political ideals of the West, how he has given practical proofs of his patriotism and how at the same time he feels and expresses the Indian's sense of the spiritual significance of things, is full of universal love, idealises and spiritualises and shows the divineness of the ordinary phenomena and relations of life, and takes us through the gate of beauty into the very shrine of Love where angels stand with praying lips and adoring eyes before the Divine Presence.

We must pay special attention to Tagore's Nature-poetry if we desire to know the full measure of his genius. In the case of all poets the first sweet call of Beauty to a higher life in her sweet service comes from the sight of the beauty and sublimity of Nature. In English literature nature poetry went through every stages. At first nature was used as a background for the expression of human emotions or as a thing which was full of beauty though it had no spiritual message to the soul. It was in the nineteenth century that love of

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Nature reached its most various and beautiful developments in English poetry. Nature has risen to as high a position as humanity as a subject of art. The subbine poetry of Wordsworth and Shelley, and the golden prose of Ruskin have achieved this great result. This transformation was due as much to the ideas of unity and divine immanence that travelled westward after the great Oriental scholars revealed the glories of Sanskrit literature to the wondering world as to the God-given spiritual perception of the above said great souls. It was Wordsworth that lifted this love of Nature for her own sake into a worship, and taught in immortal verse that both Nature and man are alike from God and exist together in God—a doctrine quite like the Vaishnava doctrine that *chit* (conscious souls) and *achit* (Nature) are the body of Iswara (the Lord). While Wordsworth taught that the principle of thought animated Nature, Shelley sang that the spirit of Love animated it. His *Prometheus Unbound* is a marriage hymn of the wedding of the spirit of love in Man and the spirit of love in Nature. Ruskin says of Wordsworth: "His distinctive mark was a war with pomp and pretence, and a display of the majesty of simple feelings and humble hearts, together with high reflective truth in his analysis of the courses of politics and ways of men; without these his love of nature would have been comparatively worthless." Tagore was naturally led by the genius of his race to realise both

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Nature and Man as manifestations of Infinite Love and Beauty and Wisdom, and his nature-poetry has all the sublimity of Wordsworth's nature-poetry and sweetness of Shelley's poetry together with a special spiritual and emotional appeal due to his own mystical genius and the genius of his race. We do not see in his poetry minute observation of nature or portrait-painting of single aspects of nature in leaf or bud or bloom or fruit or hill or lake or stream or sea or sky, but we have luminous descriptions of the spiritual appeal of nature, of her greater and more glorious manifestations, and of the manner in which they cheer, inspire, uplift, and gladden us and take us to the very presence of God. They fill our hearts with ineffable peace,

"Not Peace that grows by Lethe, scentless flower,
There in white langours to decline and ease,
But Peace whose names are also rapture, power,
Clear sight, and love ; for these are parts of Peace."

(*William Watson*).

I am dealing with his nature-poetry in detail when discussing his works. I shall quote here only a few examples of his manner and his message.

"The repose of the sun-embroidered green gloom slowly spread over my heart."

(*Gitanjali*, page 41.)

"The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my darling, and it scatters gems in profusion. Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling, and

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gladness without measure. The heaven's river has drowned its banks and the flood of joy is abroad." (*Gitanjali*, pages 52-53.)

" There comes the morning with the golden basket in her right hand bearing the wreath of beauty, silently to crown the earth. And there comes the evening over the lonely meadows deserted by herds, through trackless paths, carrying cool draughts of peace in her golden pitcher from the western ocean of rest. But there, where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flight in, reigns the stainless white radiance. There is no day nor night nor form nor colour, and never, never a word." (*Gitanjali*, page 63.)

Tagore is further a master of the difficult art of commingling love of nature and human emotion.

" If you would be busy and fill your pitcher, come, O come to my lake. The water will cling round your feet and babble its secret.......The shadow of the coming rain is on the sand and the clouds hang low upon the blue lines of the trees like the heavy hair above your eyebrows."

(*Gardener*, page 27.)

" It was mid-day when you went away. The dust of the road was hot and the fields panting. The doves cooed among the dense leaves. I was alone in my balcony when you went away."

(*Gardener*, page 95.)

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In short, Tagore has, to use the words of Coleridge, "the original gift of spreading the atmosphere of the ideal world over familiar forms and incidents," and reveals to us the deep and sweet affinities of things and their infinite suggestion of divine immanence. In him the senses are spiritualised; love is wedded to reason; knowledge is touched by emotion; and over all broods a pure and spiritual imagination. We may well say of him as Matthew Arnold said of Wordsworth:

> "He found us when the age had bound
> Our souls in its benumbing round:
> He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.
> He laid us as we lay at birth,
> On the cool flowery lap of earth,
> Smiles broke from us, and we had ease.
> The hills were round us, and the breeze,
> Went o'er the sunlit fields again;
> Our foreheads felt the wind and rain;
> Our youth returned: for there was shed,
> On spirits that had long been dead,
> Spirits dried up and closely furled,
> The freshness of the early world."

Tagore's love poetry is of wonderful charm and attractiveness. I have considered it in all its fulness and variety of charm when dealing with the *Gardener*. He has depicted the morning radiance of love, its unselfishness, its delight in self-sacrifice, its deathlessness in spite of adverse influences, and its divineness. The idyll of love in *Chitra* is as full of meaning as it is full of charm. It shows that love is "a marriage of minds," that unions based on a mere basis of physical attractions cloy at

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the close, and that the unselfish and pure love born of affinity of soul is the sweetest and most lasting thing in the world. In *The King of the Dark Chamber* the soul is shown in the course of purification to attain to the highest raptures of love. Love attains to the highest altitudes of rapture only when in alliance with law. Tagore shows also that in every human love the real quest of the soul is supernal beauty and divine love.

Tagore's prevailing mood is the lyric mood, and his genius is essentially lyrical. This is partly due to the subjective temper of the age and partly to his own peculiar poetical temperament. F. T. Palgrave says: "A decided preference for lyrical poetry,—to which in all ages the perplexed or overburdened heart has fled for relief and confession, has shown itself for sixty years or more; an impulse traceable in a large measure to the increasingly *subjective* temper of the age, and indeed already in different phases foreshown by Shelley and by Wordsworth." Tagore's partiality for the lyric is due in a large measure to his love of music and his being a musician of genius. Mr. Yeats says: "Rabindranath Tagore writes music for his words, and one understands that he is so abundant, so spontaneous, so daring in his passion, so full of surprise, because he is doing something which never seems strange, unnatural or in need of defence." We must however remember that though lyric poetry is intensely subjective, it is not wanting in universal elements. The greatest lyric poets

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in seeking full self-expression voice forth the most powerful and passionate feelings of the human heart. They are lifted by the power of song into the heaven of the universal human heart. The lyrical expression becomes perfect only when in the intensity of subjective self-expression the self is forgotten in the expression. Hence the universality of Tagore's lyric appeal. I have already referred to Tagore's nature-lyrics and love-lyrics. They are perfect in motive, in expression, in suggestion. He has further perfected the religious lyric. The beauty of his devotional lyrics deserves special mention because India is a land in which in both Sanscrit and the Vernaculars there is a large body of the most moving devotional poetry and hence it is next to impossible for any subsequent poet to achieve signal praise for devotional poesy. Yet Tagore has achieved the impossible. As has been well said, all the aspirations of mankind are in his hymns. I have discussed his devotional poetry at great length in the succeeding pages. He prays in *Gitanjali* : "Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains into a single current and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to Thee." The lyrics of childhood in *The Crescent Moon*, the lyrics of life and love in *The Gardener*, the lyrics of heavenly beauty and heavenly love in *Gitanjali*, and the inexpressibly beautiful lyrics scattered in his dramatic works show how full of variety and beauty is Tagore's lyrical genius and how wonderful is his lyric achievement.

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Tagore's dramas also have this undercurrent of lyric element in them. In fact in Indian dramas generally there is more lyric element than in Western dramas. So far as the popular stage is concerned the lyric elements have overshadowed the purely dramatic elements. This is partly due to the fact that the plays acted were composed by men without dramatic genius and partly to the fact that the actors were often drawn from the lowest classes of society and were often men without any real culture and could not properly express emotion by words, tone, and gesture. It was due also to the decline of taste in the dark ages of Indian history. Some measure of the blame is attributable also to an old inherent mental tendency by which verse overshadowed prose and music overshadowed verse. Prose has its own cadences and harmonies ; and so has poetry. Neither need be ashamed of its sweet unborrowed beauty. Music, " heavenly maid," being of perfect attractiveness, prose and verse often chose to be her slaves forgetting their own dignity and charm and lovelines. In classical drama the lyric element enhances the beauty without spoiling the purely dramatic elements. In Tagore it must be said that in spite of the surpassing beauty of the plays the lyric and mystical elements are not fully subordinated to the dramatic elements. In the Indian classical drama the evolution of the dramatic incidents without undue obtrusion of the lyric, musical, and mystical elements has been achieved. Characteris-

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ation, dialogue, progress of the narrative in a natural manner, and wealth of incident—which are all necessary elements for stage effect and lasting emotional appeal—are well attended to by the great dramatists of India. In Tagore's plays though characterisation and dialogue are very good, there is no attempt at wealth of incident or display of character in action or clash of personalities or working towards a *denouement* while keeping the audience in suspense and breathless expectation. But their naturalness, simplicity, lyric beauty, musical charm, and subtle spiritual suggestion are remarkable, and we owe to him a new and original dramatic form of great poetic beauty and spiritual elevation.

Those who have had the rare privilege and happiness of hearing Tagore's songs especially as sung by him speak in rapturous terms about them. Such musical perfection can be born only in a country where there is a great musical tradition, a plastic and susceptible language, and a deep and widespread love of song in the people. All these requirements are satisfied all over India and especially in Bengal. The *Harikatha* and *Sankirthana* movements are still full of vitality and are making for unity, purity, and piety among Indian humanity. Human love and love of nature catch a new radiance from God-love and shine with a deathless and heavenly glow which is not theirs in other lands, and musical emotion kindled by them everywhere gets a new quickening and heightening by alliance with spiritual rapture. Even

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in the most passionate songs of human love, the song of nature's beauty and the song of love of God interblend in some subtle manner strangely sweet. Mr. Rhys says: "So it is with the music of these songs: there is a sighing cadence in some of the most passionate stanzas, as if the music turned to the wind and the streams to find an accompaniment for the rhythms of the words, born of the desire of young lovers." One cannot emphasize too strongly this musical approach of Tagore's mind into the heart of things, for the blending of music, mystery, and mental graces is the greatest charm and most distinctive trait of his genuis.

Tagore's novels are discussed by me separately. In them also the lyrical element and spiritual suggestiveness that we found in his plays are seen. They have the magic of style, the naturalness and beauty of dialogue, and the power of vivid character-painting in a few strokes that his dramas have. They combine reality and romance, truth to nature and suggestion of the supernatural. But he seems to lose his foothold when the lyric mood passes, and his long novels—*e.g.*, *Gora*—are not said to be a success.

His miscellaneous prose writings-except *Sadhana*-have not been collected. His sermons called "*Shantiniketan*" published in fourteen volumes are said to contain some of his most beautiful thoughts. But *Sadhana* as well as the miscellaneous prose writings translated in the pages of the *Modern Review* reveal his possession of a wonderful

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prose style in which the graces of poetry adorn without weakening the simplicity and directness of the prose. I have discussed his *Sadhana* in a later chapter and his miscellaneous prose writings in the penultimate chapter. They show how well he has understood Indian ideals, how true is his vision as to the duty of Indians and the destiny of India now and hereafter, how well he has entered into the spirit of the greatest poets of our nation —especially Kalidasa—and how Tagore is not only our greatest poet but also the most far-sighted, patriotic, and true-hearted lover and servant of India.

We may well-ask why Tagore has not excelled in writing long narrative or epic poems. The glory of the lyric art carries with it its own limitation. One passionate soaring into the highest empyrean of thought and emotion, and then a quick descent—such is the nature of the lyric mood. The narrative and epic poets do not soar very high but

> "Sail with supreme dominion
> Through the azure deep of air"

and maintain their flight for a long time. Tagore has—and cannot help having—the special merits and limitations of his unique and wonderful poetic genius.

His art passed through three stages of development—the first dealing with the raptures of life and love ; the second dealing with his motherland's duties, greatness, mission, and destiny ; and the third dealing with the highest longings and aspirations of mankind yearning

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to see the Infinite Beauty and win His love as the heart's highest and holiest dower.

After all the most beautiful and permanently valuable trait of his genius is his mystical sense and his power of realising and making us realise the spiritual significance of things. I am dealing with this trait at some length in a later portion of this chapter. It is this great power that has enabled him to bring healing balm to the inner ailments of the time and to take the purified and happy soul to the very Throne of Grace in an attitude of glad and perfect love and adoration.

XI. Tagore's Style.

His Bengali style is recognised and admitted by all to be perfect in beauty and power, to be "full of subtlety of rhythm, of untranslateable delicacies of colour, of metrical invention." The Bengali tongue possesses great elasticity, rhythmic power and grace, and force of figurative expression. Being a descendant of the divine Sanscrit, it has the graces and stateliness of the Sanscrit together with a suppleness and plastic power born of manipulation by great literary and musical geniuses in the middleages.

Tagore's English style is remarkable not only for its beauty but also for the fact that it has discovered even to the English genius new possibilities in the English language. The Rev. Mr. C. F. Andrews says : " The English of to-day has filtered into literature from journalism, advertisements, and popularised slang, and has

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debased the King's coinage." Love of phrasing has become a craze, and the search for the effective and jewelled phrase has become such a preoccupation with Mr. Chesterton and other leading prosewriters of to-day that the older prose style—pure, lucid, full of sweet cadences and harmonies—has almost disappeared. Tagore's English is pure and simple and harmonious. As the reviewer of Tagore's poems in the *Quarterly Review* says, we see in them "an English style which combines at once the feminine grace of poetry with the virile power of prose." He well calls the *Gitanjali* "this flower of English prose."

But the great significance of Tagore's works is of course their being masterpieces of literature in the Bengali language. I have already shown how the existence of a number of great languages in India—each with a great literature and great literary traditions—is no real menace to national unity. Even they have innumerable beauties in common and have a further bond of union in the common allegiance and love they have for the divine Sanscrit. The modern agitators who set up the English tongue against the vernaculars and the Sanscrit, the Sanscrit against the vernaculars, or the vernaculars against the Sanscrit are traitors to the national cause, and they are responsible for a great deal of the intellectual sterility and social disunion that now disfigure this fair and sacred land of ours. They are more in evidence in the

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Madras Presidency than elsewhere; but the nuisance is a more or less general phenomenon in India. Rev. A.F. Gardiner in his recent Conovcation address said: " The enlistment of the vernaculars is an indispensable element in national enlightenment. For, while on the one hand, the function of English is to unite in one enlightened body all those who participate directly in the learning of the west, on the other hand, the national assimilation of that more accurate information and wider culture can be effected only by calling in the aid of the vernaculars...It would be difficult to determine how far the education of an Indian could be considered in any sense complete without an adequate acquaintance with one or other of the languages and literatures which have sprung up in his native land or have become acclimatized to it." It is a pity that many among us have not even this amount of perception as to the national needs of India. Even if Tagore had done nothing else, his having chosen his vernacular as the vehicle of expression and having brought it to a high state of perfection would by itself justify Indians in offering him their tribute of admiration and love.

I must in this connection refer to the battle of styles which has not yet ended in regard to the proper form of the vernacular style. Some writers stand up for the old classical style and others are for making the style of literature an echo of the spoken tongue. Both are wrong and as usual in India, in social and other

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spheres of activity, empty discussions as to how to begin take the place of loyal work. Educate the people and place all your styles before them. We shall then see the survival of the best and fittest style. Every language grows with the growth of the race, and it is absurd to decree that it shall not grow and change. But to rush to the other extreme and discard all the beautiful traditions of literature and art that have grown and gathered during the ages, and to make the new literary style an echo of the spoken tongue which has become debased by literature having had no popular appeal in the middle ages and having been in the hands of literary coteries is an unpatriotic, shortsighted, and suicidal act.

There is a complaint even in Bengal that though Tagore's poetic genius and artistic vigilance have enabled him, while handling the Bengali tongue in a new manner and freeing it from its classical fetters, not to cross the line that separates the laws of poetic expression from license and slang, others who have been his followers and imitators have crossed the line and are murdering the language. There have been great masters of the vernaculars in India till within a few decades ago, and our duty, while trying to achieve directness and terseness of expression which is one of the chief glories of the English language, is to study the masterpieces of vernacular literature and follow not in a spirit of slavish homage but in a spirit of love the

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laws that have been discoverd in India by great rhetoricians and poets in regard to poetic truth and poetic beauty.

Tagore's views on Bengali prosody are valuable. He says: "In Bengali, on the other hand, one strong syllable is followed by a whole series of atonic syllables which glide over the ear so fast that it is difficult to grasp their intonation. Is it not the image of one of our joint Hindu families? The head of the household is easily recognised, but behind him is an undistinguishable and undistinguished crowd!" (From a letter by him to Mr. J. D. Anderson published in the *Journal of The Royal Asiatic Society*). He decries the excessive use of assonance and alliteration which take away the attention of the poet and the reader from sense to sound to an improper extent. He points out that in old Bengali poetry there are not proper and harmonious ascents and descents of accent, each *akshara* (letter,) being counted as a separate matra, and that this deficiency was not felt as verse was chanted and not recited. He says: "On the other hand, I firmly believe there is an audible, a metrical, difference between syllables containing simple and compound consonants, respectively. So convinced was I of this that, some years ago, I composed a book of verses entitled *Manasi*, which contains examples of metres in which syllables containing compound consonants do the work of two *matras*. This device has now become a current usage." He

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says again : "In the verses composed in my later years I have striven to introduce the music of current speech, simply because popular language runs freely and gladly like a sparkling brook. Its wavelets dance and babble naturally. The lines you quoted from my *Gitanjali* are written to evoke the clash of consonants in collision............ The tears in the eyes and the smile on the lips of our own native muse have been hidden behind the meretricious tinsel of a veil borrowed from Sanskrit. We have forgotten how piercing and significant is the glance of her dark eyes! I have done what I can to pull aside the encumbering garment. Followers of convention may blame; I care not a whit. Let them, if they will, appraise the workmanship of the veil and the price of its glistening embroidery. What I want to see is the bright eyes behind it. In them you will find a wealth of beauty not quoted in the market rates of the bazaar's pedantry."

One of the beautiful traits of Tagore's style is its simplicity, spontaneity, and freshness. It flows in its limpid grace like a mountain brook beneath golden sunshine. It is a real joy to watch this combination of perfect grace of form and perfect simplicity. Further, his instinct for the right word is also admirable. The definition that prose is words in their best order and that poetry is the best words in their best order seems to be peculiarly applicable to Tagore's work. Again, his sense of decoration and ornamentation is per fect.

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The art of poetics has been cultivated in India to an extent and to a height of perfection unattained anywhere else in the world. The Indian's subtle sense of variations of literary decoration is as remarkable as his subtle sense of poetic harmony. Tagore himself regretted that he could not reveal in his English translation all those decorative graces that his mother tongue enabled him to give to his original compositions as a fitting and royal apparel. We must further remember that the peculiar charm of Tagore's poetic work is in a large measure due to its musical inspiration. He himself describes this process in his inimitable manner : "I have felt this again and again when composing songs. When I began to write a line, humming—

Do not hide in your heart, O Sakhi, your secret word,—then I saw that wherever the tune flew away with the words, the words could not follow on foot. Then it seemed to me as if the hidden word that I prayed to hear was lost in the gloom of the forest, it melted into the still whiteness of the full moonlight, it was veiled in the blue distance of the horizon—as if it were the innermost secret word of the whole land and sea and sky. I heard when I was very young the song 'Who dressed like a foreigner ?' and that one line of the song painted such a strange picture in my mind .... I once tried to compose a song myself under the spell of that line......... my heart began to say, 'there is a stranger going to and fro in this world of ours—her house is on the fur-

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ther shores of an ocean of mystery—Sometimes she is to be seen in the autumn morning, sometimes in the flowery midnight, sometimes we receive an intimation of her in the depths of our heart—Sometimes I hear her voice when I turn my ear to the sky.' The tune of my song led me to the very door of that stranger who ensnares the universe and appears in it, and I said :

> " Wandering over the world.
> I come to thy land,
> I am a guest at thy door, O stranger."

I give below a few salient examples of Tagore's golden felicities of style, though I know full well that to do the work adequately within this limited compass is an impossibility. To appreciate his style fully the reader must read Tagore often and realise his literary graces with the aid of imagination and love.

Tagore has further a quiet humour of his own—in which the element of irony is softened by love and by sadness at the oddities and contradictions of human life which is meant for better things but is allowed by us to be soiled by the mire of sins and sorrows and hates and lies.

> " Oh the vow of a man ! Surely thou knowest, thou god of love, that unnumbered saints and sages have surrendered the merits of their life-long penance at the feet of a woman. "

(*Chitra*, page 5).

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"Just fancy ! any one libelling me can be punished, while nobody can stop the mouth of any rascal who chooses to slander the King."

(*The King of the Dark Chamber* page 15).

"When people sought grants and presents from him, he could not somehow discover an auspicious day in the calendar ; though all days were red-letter days when we had to pay our taxes !"

(Do. page 25).

"When I had a meagre retinue at first every one regarded me with suspicion, but now with the increasing crowd, their doubts are waning and dissolving. The crowd is being hypnotised by its own magnitude."

o. Page 69).

His plays and poems abound in those golden felicities of style, that instinct for the right word, the eye for beauty and the ear for melody and the readiness to realise the suggestive associations brought by words in their long travel down the centuries, the combination of terseness and vividness—which mark the true poet and artist, about whom Tennyson says :

"All the charm of all the muses often flowering in a lonely word." and

"Jewels five words long, That on the stretched forefinger of all time Sparkle for ever."

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" I bind in bonds of pain and bliss the lives of men and women."

(*Chitra*, page 1).

" Instantly he leapt up with straight tall limbs, like a sudden tongue of fire from a heap of ashes."

(Do. page 4).

" It seemed to me that the heart of the earth must heave in joy under her bare white feet."

(Do. page 11).

" She bared her bosom and looked at her arms, so flawlessly modelled, and instinct with an exquisite caress."

(Do. page 12).

" You alone are perfect ; you are the wealth of the world, the end of all poverty, the goal of all efforts, the one woman ! "

(Do. page 18).

" A limitless life of glory can bloom and pend itself in a morning : Like an endless meaning in the narrow span of a song."

(Do. pages 20, 21).

" Shame slipped to my feet like loosened clothes."

(*Chitra*, page 24).

" Come in the lisping leaves, in the youthful surrender of flowers ;

Come in the flute songs and the wistful signs of the the woodlands !"

(*The King of the Dark Chamber* page 7).

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" The ferry of the light from the dawn to the dark
is done for the day,
The evening star is up.
Have you gathered your flowers, braided your hair,
And donned your white robe for the night ?"

(Do. page 49).

" The white, silver light of the full moon is flooding the heavens and brimming over on every side like the bubbling foam of wine".

(Do. page 81).

" The fairy mistress of dreams is coming towards you, flying through the twilight sky."

(*The Crescent Moon*, page 10).

" I shall melt into the music of the flute and throb in your heart all day ".

(Do. page 67).

" Let your gentle eyes fall upon them like the forgiving peace of evening over the strife of the day."

(Do. page 79)

I shall give below a few admirable illustrations of Tagore's powers of vivid description in general :—

" I paced alone on the road across the field while
the sunset was hiding its last gold like a miser.
The day light sank deeper and deeper into the
darkness, and the widowed land, whose harvest
had been reaped, lay silent.

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Suddenly a boy's shrill voice rose into the sky. He traversed the dark unseen, leaving the track of his song across the hush of the evening."

(*The Crescent Moon*, page 1).

" The sea surges up with laughter, and pale gleams the smile of the sea-beach.........Tempest roams in the pathless sky, ships are wrecked in the trackless water, death is abroad and children play."

(*The Crescent Moon*, page 4).

" Out of the blank darkness of our lampless meeting-place used to stream forth strains and songs and melodies, dancing and vibrating in endless succession and overflowing profusion, like the passionate exuberance of a ceaseless fountain !" (*The King of the Dark Chamber*, pages 144-145).

He has a wonderful faculty of giving faithful and beautiful descriptions of nature and life in India. His love of natural beauty and his intimate realisation of the joys and sorrows of men and women in our land have given him a unique power of delineation of the glories of earth and sea and sky in India and of the lives of men and women. Only a few examples are given below here, as I shall make an attempt in the later portion of this book to interpret fully each great work of Tagore s genius.

" His village home lay there at the end of the waste land, beyond the sugar-cane field, hidden among

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the shadows of the banana and the slender areca palm, the cocoa-nut and the dark green jack-fruit trees." (*The Crescent Moon*, page 1).

"The shepherd boy has gone home early from the pasture, and men have left their fields to sit on mats under the eaves of their huts, watching the scowling clouds." (Do. page 35).

"The palm trees in a row by the lake are smiting their heads against the dismal sky; the crows with their draggled wings are silent on the tamarind branches, and the eastern bank of the river is haunted by a deepening gloom . . . . The sky seems to ride fast upon the madly-rushing rain; the water in the river is loud and impatient; women have hastened home early from the Ganges with their filled pitchers . . . . . . The road to the market is desolate, the lane to the river is slippery. The wind is roaring and struggling among the bamboo branches like a wild beast tangled in a net."

(Do. pages 36-7).

"They say there are strange pools hidden behind that high bank.

Where flocks of wild ducks come when the rains are over, and thick reeds grow round the margins where water-birds lay their eggs;

Where snipes with their dancing tails stamp their tiny footprints upon the clean soft mud;

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Where in the evening the tall grassess crested with white flowers invite the moonbeam to float upon their waves."

(*The Crescent Moon*, pages 42–43).

"I have heard the liquid murmur of the river through the darkness of midnight."

(Do. page 70).

"Autumn sunsets have come to me at the bend of a road in the lonely waste, like a bride raising her veil to accept her lover."

(Do. page 70).

"Sunlight danced on the ripples like restless tiny shuttles weaving golden tapestry."

(Do. page 72).

"See, there where Auntie grinds lentils in the quirn, the squirrel is sitting with his tail up and with his wee hands he is picking up the broken grains of lentils and crunching them."

(*The Post Office*, pages 10–11).

"Indeed, they (the parrots) live among the green hills; and in the time of the sunset when there is a red glow on the hillside, all the birds with their green wings go flocking to their nests!"

(*The Crescent Moon*, pages 62–63).

"Oh it (the waterfall) is like molten diamonds; and my dear! what dances they have! Don't they make the pebbles sing as they rush over them to the sea?" (Do. page 63).

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A few examples may be given here of Tagore's profound reflections on life here and hereafter, earthly and divine—containing as they do the quintessence of his philosophy of life which is both lofty and deep.

"Illusion is the first appearance of Truth. She advances towards her lover in disguise. But a time comes when she throws off her ornaments and veils, and stands clothed in naked dignity. I grope for that ultimate *you*, that bare simplicity of truth."

(*Chitra* page 52).

"No littleness can keep us shut up in its walls of untruth for aye. Were it not so, how could we hope in our heart to meet him?"

(*The King of the Dark Chamber*, pages 14-15)

"Desire can never attain its object—it need never attain it."

(Do. page 83).

"Mistakes are but the preludes to their own destruction."

(Do. page 154).

"Do not grow impatient, King of Kanchi, sweet are the fruits of delay."

(*Chitra*, page 158).

"He only may chastise who loves."

(*The Crescent Moon*, page 22.)

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XII. Tagore's Mysticism.

In her admirable Introduction to the Translation of *One Hundred Poems by Kabir*, to which I have made frequent reference in these pages, Evelyn Underhill says: "The poetry of mysticism might be defined on the one hand as a temperamental reaction to the vision of Reality: on the other as a form of prophecy. As it is the special vocation of the mystical consciousness to mediate between the two orders, going out in loving adoration towards God and coming home to tell the secrets of eternity to other men; so the artistic self-expression of this consciousness has also a double character. It is love-poetry, but love-poetry which is often written with a missionary intention......This willing acceptance of the here-and-now as a means of representing supernal realities is a trait common to the greatest mystics." She says again: "It is a marked characteristic of mystical literature that the great contemplatives, in their effort to convey to us the nature of their communion with the supersensuous, are inevitably driven to employ some form of sensuous imagery, coarse and inaccurate as they know such imagery to be, even at the best. Our normal human consciousness is so completely committed to dependence on the senses, that the fruits of intuition itself are instinctively referred to them. In that intuition it seems to the mystics that all the dim cravings and partial apprehensions of sense find perfect fulfilment. Hence their

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constant declaration that they *see* the uncreated light, they *hear* the celestial melody, they *taste* the sweetness of the Lord, they *know* an ineffable fragrance, they *feel* the very contact of love.......These are excessive dramatizations of the symbolism under which the mystic tends instinctively to represent his spiritual intuition to the surface consciousness. Here, in the special sense-perception which he feels to be most expressive of Reality, his peculiar idiosyncrasies come out."

These two passages show in an admirable manner what is the true glory of the mystical consciousness. It is the function of poetry and music to reveal as far as is possible for them the messages from the mystical consciousness to man. As Shelley says : "Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the best and happiest minds. It is, as it were, the interpretation of a diviner nature through our own. It redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man." The dictionary meaning of a mystic as "one who believes in spiritual apprehension of truths beyond the understanding" is followed by a remark : "whence mysticism (often contempt)." Dr. Max Nordau goes the length of regarding mysticism as a form of mental degeneration. Others think that it has some alliance with black magic and the realm of darkness. But a certain amount of detachment, purity, and personal realisation is necessary before one can know the truth about

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mysticism. As Franz Hartmann says: "If our whole time and attention be taken up by the illusions of sense, we will lose the power to perceive that which is supersensuous; the more we look at the surface, the less will we know of the kernel; the more we sink into matter, the more will we become unconscious of the spirit which is the life of all things......The eyes of a world that stepped out from a night of bigotry into the light of day, were dazzled and blinded for a while by the vain glitter of a pile of rubbish and broken pots that had been collected by the advocates of material science, who palmed it off for diamonds and precious stones; but the world has recovered from the effect of the glare, and realized the worthlessness of the rubbish, and it again seeks for the less dazzling but priceless light of the truth." Indeed, as he says: "A person who peremptorily denies the existence of anything which is beyond the horizon of his understanding, because he cannot make it harmonize with his accepted opinions, is as credulous as he who believes everything without discrimination......This power of spiritual perception, potentially contained in every man, but developed in a few, is almost unknown to the guardians of science in modern civilization, because learning is often separated from wisdom, and the calculating intellect seeking for worms in the dark caverns of the earth cannot see the genius that floats towards the light and it cannot realize his existence." (Introduction to *Paracelsus*). Not

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only are detachment and purity necessary for mystical perception, but strenuous inner effort storing up mystical experience is required to make the mystic vision sure, wide, and deep. Further, a great mystic's experience can become *real* for us only when we have a similar experience in our souls, though the heart can apprehend in a slight degree the mystical radiance that lights up dim-lit depths of soul in us. As Morley says in his essay on *Dante* : " We accept a truth of science so soon as it is demonstrated, are perfectly willing to take it on authority, can appropriate whatever use there may be in it without the least understanding of its processes, as men send messages by the electric telegraph, but every truth of morals must be re-demonstrated in the experience of the individual man before he is capable of utilizing it as a constituent of character or a guide in action."

Caroline F. E. Spurgeon says in her valuable book on *Mysticism in English Literature* : " If a man has this particular temperament, his mysticism is the very centre of his being : it is the flame which feeds his whole life ; and he is intensely and supremely happy just so far as he is steeped in it. Mysticism is, in truth, a temper rather than a doctrine, an atmosphere rather than a system of philosophy." The reviewer of Tagore's works in the *Quarterly Review* well says : " For the mystic the note of the lute is the eternal lure of God's voice leading us on to ever-new adventures in experience without

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a thought of fear or regret for what we leave behind." The mystic has a vivid and rapturous spiritual perception of the unity that underlies all diversity. Spiritual things have to be spiritually discerned, and to scorn the aid of the mystical preception in the case of the spiritual realm is like scorning the aid of eyes in trying to realise the beauty of the sky. The mystic realises God not as an metaphysical abstraction, but as the Divine Lover and Bridegroom, as the Infinite Beauty that shines in the universe and yet transcends it. "The mystic is somewhat in the position of a man who, in a world of blind men, has suddenly been granted sight, and who, gazing at the sunrise, and overwhelmed by the glory of it, tries, however falteringly, to convey to his fellows what he sees."

What is the nature of this spiritual faculty ? It has the same revealing power as imagination has in regard to the material and mental realms. Imagination is a unifying force and reveals affinities, similarities, and correspondences among things. The function of the intellect is to apprehend, separate, and classify while that of the senses is to take cognizance of things in separation bit by bit. Hence the mind has a higher unifying power than the senses, and the imagination (not the wild fancy that disports itself amidst the shows of things but the serious faculty that sees into the heart of things) has a higher unifying power than the mind. Imagination is a far and swift traveller and is ever full of radiant sur-

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prises for the mind. Shakespeare has well exclaimed:—

> The poet's eye in a fire frenzy rolling
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven.

When the poet gazes on the beloved's face and calls it the full moon shining in the sky of his soul, we feel at once how two beautiful things are brought together and shown as one in joy. The picture calls into being in our mind a number of accessory pictures. We imagine the night of the heart where everything was dark and dreary, the first red glow of the moonrise of love blushing at its venturesomeness and coming hesitatingly above the horizon, and finally the calm silver radiance of wedded love flooding the earth of our ordinary life with its gentle and purifying beams and leading our minds gently and irresistibly (कान्तासंमिततया as the beautiful and terse Sanscrit word says) to the ever-full Moon of Divine Love. Mysticism and spiritual vision go even deeper than imagination, and reveal to us the Oversoul and the deep spiritual affinities of things. This supreme faculty of the soul has been called by various names : "Transcendental feeling", "Mystic reason", "cosmic consciousness", "ecstacy", "vision", etc. It has been well described by Wordsworth thus :

> " That serene and blessed mood
> In which......the breath of this corporeal frame,
> And even the motion of our human blood,
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul:
> While with an eye made quiet by the power

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Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things." *Tintern Abbey.*

This faculty is no chance gift but is the result of purity of life, search for wisdom, and Godward love in this birth or in previous births. The mystic having to express the truths realised by him in terms of the mind and the senses, for he has touch with the outer world only through them, earthly relations and unions are adopted as symbols of vividly-realised spiritual unions. It is only in this mystical sense that God is our Father. The mystical Indian mind has realised God as Mother, Beloved, Friend, and Child as well. The expression of divine love in terms of human love is further possible because there is on human love the shadow of the light of divine joy cast by the tree of life. Nature becomes a living Presence to the mystic, and no portion of it is lower or higher than other portions in his eyes. The fall of a yellow and sere leaf is as much an illustration of the flux of things as the disappearance of a human life. It has well been said: "In order to be a true symbol, a thing must be partly the same as that which it symbolises." Hence mystic symbolism is more than a figure of speech; it is the passionate expression of a really and vividly felt fact of inner experience. Blake well describes this feeling thus:

"To see a World in a grain of sand
And a Heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour."

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I shall quote here only one perfect passage from Plato. "He who under the influence of true love rising upward from these begins to see that beauty, is not far from the end. And the true order of going or being led by another to the things of love, is to use the beauties of the earth as steps along which he mounts upwards for the sake of that other beauty, going from one to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is . . . . . . This . . . is that life above all others which man should live, in the contemplation of beauty absolute."

(*Symposium*).

It is because the true mystics dwell habitually in the inner realm where perfect Harmony, Beauty, Love and Joy reign that even their physical sheaths become bright, their utterance melodious, their minds clear and powerful, their moral sense keen and potent, and their heart full of love. As Emerson says: "Only by the vision of that wisdom can the horoscope of the ages be read, and by falling back on our better thoughts, by yielding to the spirit of prophecy which is innate in every man, we can know what it saith . . . . . . only itself can inspire whom it will and behold! their speech shall be lyrical and sweet and universal as the rising of the wind . . . When it breathes through his intellect

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it is genius ; when it breathes through his will it is will, it is virtue ; when it flows through his affection, it is love."

(*The Oversoul*).

Hence it is that the great mystics of the world become great poets, musicians, prophets, geniuses, and leaders of humanity without aiming at such a consummation. All the evils of the world—lust, avarice, anger, ignorance vanity, and hate—arise from our blindness of vision. By, imagination we realise our unity in a common humanity and our brotherhood. By mystic vision we realise our unity in God. All the wars of the world are due to the tyranny of the senses and the mind. The senses crave satisfaction and are separating forces. The good things of life must be for me alone ; let me kill that man and take his good things for my use,—that is the whisper of the senses. If one heeds their siren voice he is spiritually lost. The mind is ever a vain thing. It says to the soul :—That is a barbarian, a man of low mind ; for the sake of the mental uplift of the world let that low type disappear; let me bear the burden ; kill off that savage and let me, the civilised one capable of high mentation, live in proud glory under the sky without my eye being vexed by the sight of that savage. This is the whisper of the mind. If one heeds its siren voice he is spiritually lost. Alas ! what has not the tyranny of the mind and the senses to answer for at the bar of Love ! What unhappiness, deep agony, shattered homes and

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bleeding hearts, are due to hate—and to war, the worst manifestation of hate. Can all the crowns of the world soothe the cry of a single orphan or the mute agony of a widow? Imagination goes a small way towards unification and brotherhood but not far. Hence it is that western nations in spite of culture and imagination have not freed themselves from the tyranny of the senses and the mind. Coleridge has shown that not even thousand French Revolutions can bring about true freedom.

> "The sensual and the dark rebel in vain,
> Slaves by their own compulsion! In mad game
> They burst their manacles, and wear the name
> Of freedom graven on a heavier chain!"

It is only when the mystical faculty is in "in widest commonalty spread" that the higher state of human enlightenment will dawn upon the suffering earth.

Christ was a great mystic and his use of nature—symbolism is a remarkable fact. Oscar Wilde—after the chastening of his wild spirit in the baptism of suffering—says of Him: "One always thinks of him as a young bridegroom with his companion as indeed he somewhere describes himself; as a shepherd straying through a valley in search of green meadow or cool stream; as a singer trying to build out of music the walls of the City of God; or as a lover for whose love the whole world was too small". In English Literature also we have had great mystics. Caroline Spurgeon says

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truly that the great mystical writers in English can be grouped according to the five main pathways by which they have seen the vision—Love, Beauty, Nature, Wisdom, Devotion. It is not possible to do more than mention here a few great names.—Shelley, Wordsworth, Browning, Blake, Vaughan, Donne, Richard Rolle and others have made us realise "discord blending into harmony, difference merging into unity."

The most glorious and perfect manifestations of the mystical vision are to be found in India. The wonderful beauty and sublimity of Nature in India, the existence of a race dowered with a rare faculty of insight, and other favourable circumstances are responsible for this wonderful and unique phenomenon. Ernest Horrwitz says in his *Short History of Indian Literature*: "The ancients meant by theosophy intuitive wisdom which shines in pure and selfless hearts. But the modern teachings which are labelled theosophical, though they have appropriated the venerable name and the occult phraseology which has gathered round it, have caught little of the hidden spirit, the soul's truest and best. Far sounder is the teaching supplied by Master Eckhart (1300 A. D.) and Jacob Boehme (1600 A. D.) two German theosophists; but what is the pale light of their veiled utterances compared to the vivid realisation and fearless language of the golden Upanishads?"

Tagore is a great mystic, poet, and saint. His is the

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rare dower of mystical and spiritual vision. I have already shown how in a large measure he is the spiritual descendant of the Vaishnava and Sufi mystics. I shall show in a later chapter the deep correspondences between him and Kabir. But his spiritual vision has got a beauty, power, and sweetness of its own—unique, unequalled, original. To appreciate it to the full, one must read him again and again with a devout, dedicated, and pure heart, and in a spirit of deep thankfulness to God who in his love for this holy land is sending great souls again and again to us, so that we may reach the heaven of His Love. His mysticism is in alliance with the true love of country, the true joys of love, the true raptures of service, and the highest moral life. He preaches not asceticism but renunciation of selfishness, not quiescence but radiant activity in the service of love. He has made life heavenlier and sweeter and purer by letting the light of love play on it, and he is one of the greatest forces making for the reign of light and love in the world.

It is very difficult to select illustrations of his wonderful mystical genius when we see in his works an inexhaustible affluence of mystic thought and emotion in almost every page. The following are a few examples.

"He who plays his music to the stars is standing at
your window with his flute."

(*The Crescent Moon*, page 11).

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"When in girlhood my heart was opening its petals, you hovered as a fragrance about it."

(Do. page 16).

"At sunrise open and raise your heart like a blossoming flower, and at sunset bend your head and in silence complete the worship of the day."

(Do. page 80).

" My beloved is ever in my heart
That is why I see him everywhere

. . . .

Come to my heart and see his face in the tears of my eyes !"

(*The King of the Dark Chambre*, page 21).

"But me the wild winds of unscalable heights have touched and kissed—Oh, I know not when or where!" (Do. page 38).

" The music of enchantment will pursue them and pierce their hearts." (Do. page 58).

" My sorrow is sweet to me in this spring night.
My pain smites at the chords of my love and softly sings.
Visions take birth from my yearning eyes and flit in the moonlit sky.
The smells from the depths of the woodlands have lost their way in my dreams.
Words come in whispers to my ears, I know not from where,
And bells in my anklets tremble and jingle in tune

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with my heart thrills." (Do. page 82).

"Let each separate moment of beauty come to me like a bird of mystery from its unseen nest in the dark bearing a message of music."

(*Chitra*, page 53).

"Oh, how I wish—I wish that I could wander rapt and lovely in the thick woodland arbours of the heart?"

(*The King of the Dark Chamber*, page 83).

"It is thy love that feigns this neglect—thy caressing arms are pushing me away—to draw me back to thy arms again!

(Do. pages 116–117).

"I am waiting with my all in the hope of losing everything." (Do. page 184).

"My song will sit in the pupils of your eyes, and will carry your sight into the heart of things."

(*The Crescent Moon* page 78).

"Your feet are rosy-red with the glow of my heart's desire, gleaner of my sunset songs."

(*The Gardener*, page 58).

"He came when the night was still . . . he had his harp in his hands, and my dreams became resonant with its melodies."

(*Gitanjali*, page 20).

"Entering my heart unbidden even as one of the common crowd, my king, thou didst press the signet of eternity upon many a fleeting moment

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of my life." (*Gitanjali*, page 35).

"What divine drink woulds't thou have, my God, from this overflowing cup of my life?"

(*Gitanjali*, page 61).

Tagore has a rare and wonderful faculty of realising and expressing the spiritual significance of things. This faculty is overwhelmed in us by the surging tides of worldliness, strife, and desire. But those who have attained the inner heights of peace and love and renunciation see things in the light of the soul and realise the right relations of things. In trying to understand his style, we must bear this aspect in our minds prominently. I give below a few examples of this great faculty.

"It seems to me because the earth can't speak, it raises its hands into the sky and beckons. And those who live far off, and sit alone by their windows can see the signal."

(*The Post Office*, pages 14-15).

"Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling, and gladness without measure. The heaven's river has drowned its banks and the flood of joy is abroad." (*Gitanjali*, page 53).

XIII. Tagore's Religious Ideas.

Carlyle has called religion "the chief fact with regard to man;" and it is very interesting to know Tagore's religious ideas, both because religion is the most important element of a man's life, and because in

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the case of such a deeply spiritual mind as Tagore's, the world may well expect a gospel of true wisdom and real profundity of thought illumined by a vivid inner realisation and experience. His ancestry, the special bent of his genius, his habits of life, his temperament, and his studies have fitted him to be a spiritual leader while being a poet and a practical patriot. It is this combination of great gifts that more than anything else that has endeared him to India and won for him the reverence and love of the whole world.

Tagore's loftiest religious message is contained in his *Sadhana* and his *Gitanjali*. I am dealing with these great works at length in later chapters. It is said that his sermons called *Shantiniketan* contain some of his loftiest and greatest religious thoughts. To express Tagore's religious message adequately, one must have something of the " vision and faculty divine," which he possesses in such an ample measure. What I seek to do here is merely to make a few remarks by way of suggestions and hints, as I do not feel worthy to do more. This work will have to be taken up for fuller exposition by some one far fitter than myself or by me when I become fitter to do it.

Tagore's great spiritual gospel is the gospel that India has been giving to the world during the immemorial ages:—the gospel of spiritual unity and divine immanence.

" The same stream of life, that runs through my

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veins night and day, runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures.

It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.

It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and of death, in ebb and in flow."

(*Gitanjali*, pages 64 and 65.)

He cries out exultingly:—

"In this play-house of infinite forms I have had my play and here have I caught sight of him that is formless." (*Gitanjali*, page 88.)

Tagore teaches again and again in a convincing manner the immortality of the soul and its ascent through many births to the lotus feet of God.

"Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life."

(*Gitanjali*, page 1).

"The time that my journey takes is long and the way of it long.

I came out on the chariot of the first gleam of light, and pursued my voyage through the wildernesses of worlds, leaving my track on many a star and planet.

It is the most distant course that comes nearest to thyself, and that training is the most intricate which leads to the utter simplicity of a tune."

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(*Gitanjali*, page 10).

"Day by day thou art making me worthy of thy full acceptance by refusing me ever and anon, saving me from perils of weak, uncertain desire."

(Do. page 12).

Tagore's poems on death reveal the above ideal vividly. Death is merely the preparation for a higher and fuller life, if this life has been lived in love of man and God and has been full of high purpose and achievement.

"It is thou who drawest the veil of night upon the tired eyes of the day to renew its sight in a fresher gladness of awakening.

(*Gitanjali*, page 20).

"And because I love this life, I know that I shall love death as well. The child cries out when from the right breast the mother takes it away, in the very next moment to find in the left one its consolation."

Gitanjali, page 87).

Tagore teaches that the real treasure of the soul is God and that the highest joy of life is the attainment of divine union. The soul is the bride that awaits the consummation of her existence by meeting and loving the Eternal Bridegroom.

"She who ever had remained in the depth of my being, in the twilight of gleams and of glimpses; she who never opened her veils in the morning

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light, will be my last gift to thee, my God folded in my final song. . . . .

There was none in the world who ever saw her face to face, and she remained in her loneliness waiting for thy recognition."

(*Gitanjali*, pages 61, and 62).

"The flowers have been woven and the garland is ready for the bridegroom. After the wedding the bride shall leave her home and meet her lord alone in the solitude of night."

(*Gitanjali*, page 84).

Tagore teaches that the raptures of divine union can be attained only by love, renunciation, and utmost simplicity and self-surrender.

"My song has put off her adornment. She has no pride of dress and decoration. Ornaments would mar our union; they would come between thee and me; their jingling would drown thy whispers.

"My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight. O master poet, I have sat down at thy feet. Only let me make my life simple and straight, like a flute of reed for thee to fill with music."

(*Gitanjali*, page 6).

The highest teaching of Hindu thought is that it is by this *Atma Nivedana* (surrender of our self to Him and substituting His will in the place of our will on the

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throne of our heart) that the highest heaven of self-realisation is attained.

Tagore teaches also that we have to rise to the heaven of His love by loving and serving His creatures ; that he who seeks realisation by abandoning the path of unselfish work and limitless love is like one that longs to fly in the air without wings ; and that what we should aim at is not freedom *from* action but freedom *in* action. There are some critics in India who in their excess of irrational love for everything foreign, have gone the length of saying that Tagore is a mystic who preaches the philosophy of quiescence. Tagore says :

> "O giver of thyself ! at the vision of thee as joy let our souls flame up to thee as the fire, flow on to thee as the river, permeate thy being as the fragrance of the flower. Give us strength to love, to love fully, our life in its joys and sorrows, in its gains and losses, in its rise and fall. Let us have strength enough fully to see and hear thy universe, and to work with full vigour therein."
>
> (*Sadhana*, pages 133, and 134).

Much more could be said about Tagore's great spiritual teachings. But for reasons already given I content myself now with the above exposition, hoping that I have said enough to show how Tagore has thrown the light of his pure soul on the ultimate problems of life and the destiny of the human soul.

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XIV. Tagore's Conception of Womanhood.

A great poet's conception of womanhood is always a real and sure test of his art. If art is the revelation of beauty and love, it must find the heaven of a woman's heart to be its fittest shrine. There is sure to be something shallow and unworthy about the art which has glitter and even power, but which takes a low view of womanhood. Woman is the guardian of the emotional and spiritual elements of the race; she has the divine gifts of sympathy and intuition, and her heart soars on the wings of sympathy and intuition over seemingly insurmountable barriers separating man from man and man from God. Women have not often been great spiritual thinkers or leaders, but they have often lived lives of perfect peace, love, and intuitive devotion to God. Man owes to them the heaven of love, the sweet joys of home, and the graces and charities and refinements of life. It is said that women alone can describe women adequately, and that a man's conception of womanhood must ever be inadequate. But woman, in herself, is not more important than woman in relation to man. The flower that blossoms on the tree "enjoys the air it breathes," and if its tongue were unloosened, can tell us its life in words full of truth and beauty. But only the human soul can describe what the flower means to it. As Tagore says: "In the sphere of nature the flower carries with it a certificate which recommends it as having immense capacity for doing useful work,

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but it brings an altogether different letter of introduction when it knocks at the door of our hearts. Beauty becomes its own qualification. At one place it comes as a slave, and at another as a free thing."

(*Sadhana*, page 101).

I have said that the greatest poets have interpreted the true graces of womanhood with reverence and love and in a spirit of gratitude to God for having given a glimpse of His heaven in the heart of a woman. Shakespeare's gallery of portraits of women is famous for its tenderness and its true perception of the real glories of womanhood. In Indian literature we have a wonderful gallery of portraits of women in the great epics and in Kalidasa. In regard to Kalidasa, Mr. A. W. Ryder has well said: "Kalidasa's women appeal more to the moderns than his men...............The man is the more variable phenomenon...............But the true woman is timeless, universal. I know of no poet, unless it be Shakespeare, who has given the world a group of heroines so individual yet universal, heroines as true, as tender, as brave as are Indumati, Sita, Parvati, the Yaksha's bride, and Sakuntala."

Hindu thinkers, who are supposed to be thoroughgoing misogynists, have really taken a high and noble view of womanhood. They attack the sex-love that keeps man in the petty circuit of mere animal passion. The passages so often culled by our revilers and exhibited with a smack of the lips to show that the Hindu

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has been a hater of woman, are of no force or real value when taken out of their context. Indeed the flourishing of isolated texts and passages taken out of context is the favourite weapon of national enemies within and abroad. Mr. Philip Gibbs says in his *Facts and Ideas*: "It (the worship of the female force) teaches them (the Hindus) a reverence for womanhood, and, above all, motherhood." The Hindu religion has taught that man and woman form but one being and that both together must engage in religious acts for the propitiation of ancestors and for the worship of God, though it has not shrunk from soaring above sex-love into the heaven of God-love and proclaiming that in the attainment of the final beatitude the human soul disciplined by dharma (performance of duty), *Upasana* (devotion), *Yoga* (contemplation), and *Gnana* (wisdom)—must seek self-realisation and attainment of the Supreme as a bride seeking the Eternal Bridegroom—'the Alone in search of the Alone' as has been beautifully said by a great mystical thinker.

Tagore's conception of womanhood is of wonderful beauty. It is essentially Indian but over it he has shed the magical light of his mind. I have dealt at length with his love-poetry in a later chapter. He shows love in all its aspects—in its radiant dawn full of sweet surprise, its rapture in selfless service, its strength to save from sin, and its uplifting and purifying power.

Tagore shows how man finds the first sweet suggestion of the divine on the brow of a woman and how she is to him a godward-leading angel.

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"Is it then true that the mystery of the Infinite is written on this little forehead of mine?"

(The *Gardener*, page 62).

He teaches also that love is no accident, but is the fruition of ante-natal affinity and passion.

"Is it true, Is it true, that your love has travelled alone through ages and worlds in search of me? That when you found me at last, your age-long desire found utter peace in my gentle speech and my eyes and lips and flowing hair?"

(The *Gardener*, page 61-62).

Life gets a new and diviner radiance from love and its meaning becomes clearer to our minds.

"Does the earth, like a harp, shiver into songs with the touch of my feet?

Is it then true that the dew-drops fall from the eyes of night when I am seen, and the morning light is glad when it wraps my body round?

Tagore shows also how a portion of the radiance that surrounds a woman in the eyes of a man is the light of his own soul, and how the sex-division is a divine dispensation for better realising the heaven of love.

"O woman, you are not merely the handiwork of God, but also of men; these are ever endowing you with beauty from their hearts . . . . .

The desire of men's hearts has shed its glory over your youth.

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You are one half woman and one half dream."

(The *Gardener*, page 100).

As Mr. Chunilal Mukerji well says: "Woman has a future of limitless possibilities and as the ideal of beauty is speeding on in quest of an unattainable goal. Rabindranath's ideal of womanhood shall ever like the blue beautiful girdle of horizon lure us on into the endless region where finitude is shut up and lost in an overwhelming infinity."

Tagore is not content with merely suggesting the mystery of woman's beauty and the mystery of love. He shows in what manner love fulfils itself in her heart and uplifts her and man through her into a higher state of being. Tagore shows that love is not passion, but the very soul of goodness. He gives his own dearest ideal in thus describing Kalidasa's ideal of womanhood.

> "This ancient poet of India refuses to acknowledge passion as the supreme glory of love, he proclaims goodness as the goal of love."
>
> (*Kalidasa, the Moralist*).

> "He (Kalidasa) shows Cupid vanquished and burnt to ashes, and in Cupid's place he makes triumphant a power that has no decoration, no helper—a power thin with austerities, darkened by sorrow." (Do.)

Tagore shows how India has effected a holy harmony and reconciliation between a life in the world and a life in search of God.

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" The two peculiar principles of India are the beneficent tie of home life on the one hand and the liberty of the soul abstracted from the world on the other... ..Kalidasa has shown both in *Sakuntala* and *Kumara Sambhava* that there is a harmony between these two principles, an easy transition from the one to the other . . . . . he has rescued the relation of the sexes from the sway of lust and enthroned it on the holy and pure seat of asceticism. In the sacred books of the Hindus, the ordered relation of the sexes has been defined by strict injunctions and laws. Kalidasa has demonstrated that relation by means of the elements of beauty. The Beauty that he adores is lit up by grace, modesty, and goodness ; in its intensity it is true to me for ever; in its range, it embraces the entire universe. It is fulfilled by renunciation, gratified by sorrow, and rendered eternal by religion. In the midst of this beauty, the impetuous unruly love of man and woman has restrained itself and attained to a prefound peace, like a wild torrent merged in the ocean of goodness. Therefore is such love higher and more wonderful than wild and unrestrained passion."

(*Sakuntala . Its Inner Meaning*).

Mr. Mukerji points out that Tagore's poem *Manashi* (the mind-born) shows how the light of man's soul has

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contributed to the transfiguration of womanhood ; that the poem on *Vijayini* (the victress) shows how the sweet beauty of woman is more potent than all the flowery darts of love ; that the poem on *Priya* (the wife) shows how the light shed from the woman's heart on man's soul saves it from darkness and degradation ; and that the poem on *Patita* (the fallen woman) is full of an infinite tenderness, and shows how when fallen she is like an angel fallen, full of recollections of heaven, and how by an inner effort she regains the receding heaven.

Tagore teaches that love is really a spiritual attraction and that a man can never know it by merely seeking the enjoyment of physical beauty.

> " I hold her hands and press her to my breast.
>
> I try to fill my arms with her loveliness, to plunder her sweet smile with kisses, to drink her dark glances with my eyes.
>
> Ah, but, where is it ? Who can strain the blue from the sky ?
>
> I try to grasp the beauty ; it eludes me, leaving only the body in my hands.
>
> Baffled and weary I come back.
>
> How can the body touch the flower which only the spirit may touch ?
>
> (*The Gardener*, page 86).

Tagore shows that true love can never be in antagonism to true manhood and its duties in life.

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"Free me from the bonds of your sweetness, my love! No more of this wine of kisses.
This mist of heavy incense stifles my heart.
Open the doors, make room for the morning light.
I am lost in you, wrapped in the folds of your caresses.
Free me from your spells, and give me back the manhood to offer you my freed heart.
(*The Gardener*, page 85).

Tagore's plays and stories depict his ideals of womanhood in a wonderful manner. In *Chitra* he shows how the radiance of the body is a fleeting thing, how the light of the soul is eternal, and how the true beauty of womanhood is the light of the woman's soul—"the Goddess hidden within a golden image." Arjuna cries out to Chitra:

"Illusion is the first appearance of truth. She advances towards her lover in disguise. But a time comes when she throws off her ornaments and veils and stands clothed in naked dignity. I grope for that ultimate *you*, that bare simplicity of truth."

In the *King of the Dark Chamber* Queen Sudarshana learns how she can look on the face of her Lover and Lord only when she reaches the peaks of humility, self-surrender, and measureless love and devotion. In his stories Tagore brings love into relation with every-day life as apart from the realm of

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romance, and shows how it illumines life and makes it pure and divine by self-sacrifice. The manner in which woman—as girl, as sister, as bride, as wife, as mother—makes a heaven of this earth of ours is most beautifully described in Tagore's stories.

In this manner Tagore leads us from life to love and from love to Love Infinite and Divine and leaves us face to face with the Divine Beauty and Love.

> "For love is the ultimate meaning of everything around us. It is not a mere sentiment ; it is truth; it is joy that is at the root of all creation."
>
> (Tagore's *Sadhana*, page 107.)

XV. Tagore's Social Gospel.

Though Tagore being busy with higher and holier things has not sailed often in the turbid waters of social progress, it is easy to see that such a patriot and true lover of Indian humanity must have a great social gospel. His message is one of unity and love. This is the message that India has been teaching all along, though some critics have been proclaiming that even the true caste system is opposed to unity. Tagore's message of love for India and work for her uplift deprecates all internal dissensions and has in it no element of dislike or hatred for any other race or country.

Tagore dislikes and dreads the modern theorists who dig into origins and talk learnedly about non-Aryans and Aryans and seek, while lost in wandering mazes of theories, to stir fresh forms of hatred and

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disunion in the land. He shows that both Aryan and non-Aryan elements are indistinguishable in the modern Hindu race, and that to seek to separate them is as futile as to seek to separate the waters of the Ganges and the Jumna below Prayag. He says:

> "Let none, however, imagine that the non-Aryans have contributed nothing of value to Indian life. The ancient Dravidians were, indeed, not deficient in civilisation. Contact with them made Hindu civilisation varied in aspect and deeper in spirit. The Dravidian was no theologian, but an expert in imagination, music, and construction. He excelled in the fine arts. The pure spiritual knowledge of the Aryans, mingling with the Dravidians' emotional nature and power of æsthetic creation, formed a marvellous compound, which is neither entirely Aryan nor entirely non-Aryan, but *Hindu*. The eternal quest for the harmonising of these two opposite elements has given to India a wondrous power. She has learnt to perceive the eternal amidst the temporal, to behold the great whole amidst all the petty things of daily life. And wherever in in India these two opposite elements are not fully reconciled, there is no end to our ignorance and superstition...wherever the opposite genuises of the Aryan and the Dravidian have been harmonised, beauty has leaped into life; wherever

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such union has failed, the moral ugliness is repulsive."

TAGORE'S "MY INTERPRETATION OF INDIAN HISTORY."

Tagore shows how while we must assimilate fruitful ideas from other races we should never lose our individuality.

"We feel that India is eager to get back to her Truth, her One, her Harmony. The stream of her life had been dammed up ages ago; its waters had become stagnant; but to-day the dam has been breached somewhere; we feel that our still waters have again become connected with the mighty ocean; the tides of the free wide universe have begun to make themselves felt in our midst......At one impulse cosmopolitanism is leading us out of home; at the next, the sense of nationality is bringing us back to our own community...Thus placed between two contending forces, we shall mark out the middle path in our national life; we shall realise that only through the development of racial individuality can we truly attain to universality, and only in the light of the spirit of universality can we perfect individuality; we shall know of a verity that it is idle mendicancy to discard our own and beg for the foreign, and at the same time we shall feel that it is the extreme abjectness of poverty to dwarf ourselves by rejecting the foreign."

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Tagore is never weary of repeating that India should never fail to cling to the higher things of the spirit. He says :

> "The strength of a race is limited. If we nourish the ignoble, we are bound to starve the noble."

If only our noisy social agitators remember these wise words, how much unhappiness and wrong effort would be saved !

Tagore has shown by precept and example that our main work now is educational and industrial, and he has no patience with the noisy few who believe that the social millennium will be inaugurated by resolutions at conferences. He says of these people : "All went on well as long as its promoters sat in committee, but as soon as they came down to the field of actual work it became all confusion." If we bear Tagore's social message in our heart and strive for unity in spirit and endeavour and work with all our might for the spread of enlightenment and prosperity in our land while clinging passionately to our immemorial spiritual ideals, then shall we be true children of Bharata Mata and win the reverence and love of the whole world.

XVI. Tagore's Message : Conclusion.

Tagore has thus touched life at many points and is a world-force while being Indian to the inmost core of his being. I have tried in the above pages to give a brief review of his teachings and the great traits of his art and shall try in the ensuing pages to deal at some

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length with his best-known works. In this interpretation of Tagore's mind and art the limits of space as well as the limitations of the interpreter are responsible for whatever deficiencies may be found. Tagore's genius is so many-sided and his achievement so conspicuous and multiform that a life-long study by many loving scholars who will form a Tagore society is necessary before results of lasting value and beauty can be presented to the public.

I desire in this concluding portion of the introductory chapter to lay stress once again on Tagore's great message to the Indian mind to be itself and to be proud of being itself, while assimilating all the highest elements of Western culture. The worst foes of India have been those who have imperfectly assimilated Western culture. As Dr. A. K. Coomaraswami says: "The work of Rabindranath is essentially Indian in sentiment and form. It is at the same time modern. The literary revival in Bengal, like the similar movement in Ireland, is national, and therefore creative; it is a reaction from the barren eclecticism of the Universities. This reaction is voiced, not by those who ignore or despise, but by those who have most fully understood and assimilated foreign influences. For it is not deep acquaintance with European culture that denationalises men in Asia, but an imperfect and servile apprehension of it. Those who understand the culture of others find in it a stimulus not to imitation but to creation.

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Those who do not understand become intellectual parasites."

Tagore's influence is bound to be permanent not only over man in general, but over poets. He is indeed a poet's poet. He dwells habitually in the heaven of beauty and love, and his words have a wonderful grace and charm. Each word has a paradise of beautifully associated meanings and suggestions, and we shall soon see how a new school of poets springs into existence deriving inspiration from the genius of Tagore.

I have stated above that Tagore's great and supreme teaching addressed to Indians as individuals and social units is the message to be ourselves—our true selves. In regard to our artistic, religious, and social progress we must resent all foreign interference. Tagore's message to the Westerns as individuals and social units is to achieve a larger measure of repose, love, and spirituality. He says:

> "Man can destroy and plunder, earn and accumulate, invent and discover, but he is great because his soul comprehends all. It is dire destruction for him when he envelops his soul in a dead shell of callous habits, and when a blind fury of works whirls round him like an eddying dust storm, shutting out the horizon. That indeed kills the very spirit of his being, which is the spirit of comprehension. Essentially man is not a slave either of himself or of the word, but he

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is a lover. His freedom and fulfilment is in love, which is another name for perfect comprehension."

(Tagor's *Sadhana*, page 15).

Tagore's greatest message is to the human soul apart from all its accidents of caste or creed or colour or country. He preaches the fulfilment of the soul in love, in renunciation, in self-sacrifice; and he enforces this great lesson not only in his religious lectures, but in his poems, his stories, his dramas, nay, in his own life. He says:

"Man's abiding happiness is not in getting anything but in giving himself to ideas which are larger than his individual life—the idea of his country—of humanity—of God."

(Tagore's *Sadhana*, page 152).

He finally leads the soul to the loftiest and sweetest beatitudes of union with the infinite.

"In the region of nature which is the region of diversity, we grow by acquisition; in the spiritual world, which is the region of unity, we grow by losing ourselves, by uniting. Gaining a thing, as we have said, is by its nature partial, it is limited only to a particular want; but *being* is complete, it belongs to our wholeness, it springs not from any necessity but from our affinity with the in-

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finite, which is the principle of perfection that we have in our soul."

(*Tagore's Sadhana* page 155).

Even at the risk of repetition, I wish to lay stress again on Tagore's practical patriotism and his practical message to India. He yearns, as Swami Vivekananda yearned, to achieve Man-making. He has given the most precious of all gifts—himself—to his work, and the school at Shantiniketan is the holy spot from which the higher India of the future is destined to rise. Mr. Rhys says truly in his work on Tagore : " But now it was the soul of the world that was to be made ; and to bring about such a renaissance, there was needed, in his conception, a more humane order, a finer science of life, and a spiritual republic behind our world-politics. We may venture to enlarge his hope as we think it over, and to connect it with that other—the binding in one commonwealth of the United States of the world. The union of nations, the destroying of caste, religious pride, race-hatred, and race-prejudice—in a word, the 'making of Man ;' there lies his human aim. 'It is ' he says, ' the one problem of the present age, and we must be prepared to go through the martyrdom of sufferings and humiliations till the victory of God in man is achieved.' "

Tagore is indeed " the healer, the discerner and the lyric poet " of our time. Though he is a great uplifting and spiritual force working for the whole world,

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we take pride in the fact that he is ours, belongs to us in every way. His universal popularity in India has a deep spiritual significance. Mr. C. F. Andrews says : "Three years ago I was staying at a village in the heart of the Himalayas, as far from the poet's home as London is from Constantinople. Some Indian music was being sung in the village at the end of the day and a little lad of twelve began to sing a poem of Rabindra's whose theme was the mother-land. The dialect of the song was difficult for the Hillsmen to follow, but the drift of the words and the subdued passion of the young singer were wholly intelligible. The audience swayed backwards and forwards, as if moved by an enchanter's spell. Such is the power of the poet's music and verse in India." This deep and universal love for Tagore can be said to be real only if fruitful, if we love our Holy land with something of his love and work for her glory. Dr. A. K. Coomaraswami observes : "Those love the poets who do their will and whom their singing moves." Tagore has been, is, and will ever be inexpressibly dear to us because in his sweet accents it is our own Bharata Mata that speaks to us, her beloved children ; he has revealed to us the wondrous glory of the real treasures of our race ; he has restored to us our lost manhood and our true divinity ; and because of his immortal works, his self-sacrificing devotion to our beloved and holy land, and the shining example

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of his life, a new day of glory—glory of dream and glory of achievement—is dawning over India, and we feel with an inexpressible vividness, passionateness, and rapture that

> "We are ancients of the earth,
> And in the morning of the times."

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CHAPTER II.

GITANJALI.

This was the book that brought Tagore's genius and art prominently before the gaze of the world. It has varied and peculiar excellences, and even though it is couched in prose and hence loses all the melody and poetic grace of the original, it charms and enraptures and elevates the mind by the marvellous music of its thoughts and by the grace and beauty of the English prose which a learned critic has called "this flower of English prose." The same critic has said that "the great mystics of the world have been the children of the sun and the warm winds of the South." It is this note of high and synthetic mysticism that constitutes the unique and wonderful charm of the *Gitanjali.* I have dealt in the Introductory Chapter with the significance and value of mysticism and the mystical outlook on life, and with Tagore's greatness as a poet of mysticism. A critical study of *Gitanjali* brings home to us in an intimate and unique way the beauty and power of the mystical interpretation of life and Tagore's peculiar endowment of mind and heart which enables him to see the divine presence in things which are dull and meaningless in our eyes owing to our want of vision, our being too much with them, our insufficient sense of beauty and our deficiency of love.

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A recent critic has said that "the poet is still the greatest of all national voices," that "Poetry needs both philosophy and fact, but it can easily have too much of either," and that "it is the businesss of poetry to give a new life to life itself." These are wise words that show very well the peculiar greatness of Tagore as a poet. The highest and loftiest aspirations of the Indian mind have been voiced by Tagore in a manner unapproached by any others in modern India. By his unerring artistic vigilance he has avoided the Scylla and the Charybdis of philosophising and realism. His poetry is too securely founded on life and the universal emotions of the human heart to become a rainbow-tinted unsubstantial palace of mystical dreams that begin nowhere and end nowhere and are in spite of their beauty unrelated to life. It is at the same time inspired and aglow with love and mystical passion and hence does not fall into the error of transcribing with painful and uninforming and depressing accuracy the hard facts and uglinesses of life. It lifts the veil of commonplaceness from life and shows us the divine foundations of life and thus gives "a new life to life itself."

In his recent admirable book on Tagore, Mr. Ernest Rhys points out wherein lay the unique fascination of the *Gitanjali* for the Western mind. He says : "They (the song-offerings) took up our half-formed wishes and gave them a voice ; they rose inevitably from the life, the

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imagination, and the desires of him who wrote. They were the vehicle of a great emotion that surprised its imagery not only in the light that was like music, the rhythm that was in the waves of sound itself and the light-waves of the sun ; but in the rain, the wet road, the lonely house, the great wall that shuts in the creature-self, the shroud of dust, the night black as black-stone. It was an emotion so sure of itself that it made no effort after novelty or originality, but took the things that occur to us all, and dwelt upon them, and made them alive, and musical and significant. Their effect on those who read them was curious ; one famous critic expressed this effect half humorously when he said : ' I have met several people, not easily impressed, who could not read that book without tears. As for me, I read a few pages and then put it down, feeling it to be too good for me. The rest of it I mean to read in the next world.' "

The peculiar glory of *Gitanjali* is that in it the vision of God and hunger for the infinite are in touch with human life, do not scorn the passions and affections of the heart, and are full of a heavenly tenderness for the limitations of life. It is thoroughly universal yet intensely individual. It shows by an intensity of realisation what thin bounds divide life and nature, the world of sense and the realm of supernal light, the individual soul and God. The *Gardener* shows the human soul lit with the morning radiance of human

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love and rejoicing in its new-born sensations of keen delight in beauty of form and beauty of soul. In *Gitanjali* we have the calm starlight of the deep midnight sky through which moves in full-orbed maiden radiance the full moon of the Love of God—that blessed love in which all the fragmentary radiances of human love, love of art, and love of nature have been gathered up into a full and divine radiance that includes and transcends them in sweetness and in light.

I shall point out here the scheme of *Gitanjali* and show how throughout these " song offerings "—separate and disconnected as they might appear at first sight—there runs a lofty purpose based on a true vision of the scheme of things.

Mr. Yeats' introduction to *Gitanjali* is as full of beauty as of insight and shows how one truly poetic mind can enter into the heaven of another and greater poetic mind with more fitness and better appreciation than ordinary minds. The Bengali Doctor of Medicine referred to in that noble Introduction says: " All the aspirations of mankind are in his hymns. He is the first among our saints who has not refused to live, but has spoken of Life itself, and that is why we give him our love." Mr. Yeats says: " These lyrics...........display in their thought a world I have dreamed of all life long. The work of a supreme culture, they yet appear as much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the rushes. A tradition, where poetry and religion are the same

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thing, has passed through the centuries, gathering from learned and unlearned metaphor and emotion, and carried back again to the multitude the thought of the scholar and of the noble... ...." This is a true idea admirably expressed. In India Poetry has not folded the singing robes about her in scorn of every-day life and does not stand like

"An angel newly drest who wings for heaven." The loftiest and grandest of our poems—the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, and the *Bhagawatha*—are in intimate touch with us, form and mould our lives, and are a perpetual source of inspiration. Again, Mr. Yeats says: "These verses will not lie in little well-printed books upon ladies' tables, who turn the pages with indolent hands that they may sigh over a life without meaning, or be carried about by students at the University to be laid aside when the work of life begins, but as the generations pass, travellers will hum on the highway and men rowing upon rivers. Lovers, while they await one another, shall find, in murmuring them, this love of God a magic gulf wherein their own more bitter passion may bathe and renew its youth. At every moment the heart of this poet flows outward to these without derogation or condescension, for it has known what they will understand; and it has filled itself with the circumstance of their lives. The traveller in the red brown clothes which he wears that dust may not show upon him, the girl searching in her bed for the

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petals fallen from the wreath of her royal lover, the servant or the bride awaiting the master's home-coming in the empty houses, are images of the heart turning to God. Flowers and rivers, the blowing of conch shells, the heavy rain of the Indian July, or the parching heat, are images of the moods of that heart in union or in separation; and a man sitting in a boat upon a river playing upon a lute, like one of those figures full of mysterious meaning in a Chinese picture, is God Himself. A whole people, a whole civilisation, immeasurably strange to us, seems to have been taken up into this imagination; and yet we are not moved because of its strangeness, but because we have met our own image, as though we had walked in Rossetti's willowwood, or heard, perhaps for the first time in literature, our voice as in a dream." Herein again we realise how intuitively and wonderfully Mr. Yeats has entered into the very soul of Indian art and literature. It is Tagore's great privilege to disclose the beauty and heavenly significance lurking in the ordinary phenomena of outer and human nature, and symbol after symbol becomes transfigured in the radiance of the light of his soul. He is in touch with the whole of life and yet he transfigures it with the radiance of a higher and truer and diviner life. The *Gitanjali* affords better evidence of this trait than almost all his other works. Mr. Yeats points out how alien this spirit is to the general spirit of western literature. Indeed this feature explains Tagore's

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instantaneous yet lasting appeal to the West. Mr. Yeats says : " This is no longer the sanctity of the cell and of the scourge ; being but a lifting up, as it were, into a greater intensity of the mood of the painter, painting the dust and the sunlight, and we go for a like voice to St. Francis and to William Blake who have seemed so alien in our violent history " In the West worship of beauty and worship of holiness never joined hands. It was reserved for India to join both in a higher worship —that of Love of God,—to show the unity and beauty and divinity of life, to combine the joy of duty and the duty of joy, to lift our hearts and souls to that realm of inner paradise where light and law and love are one. Again, Mr. Yeats says : " We write long books where no page perhaps has any quality to make writing a pleasure, being confident in some general design, just as we fight and make money and fill our heads with politics—all dull things in the doing—while Mr. Tagore, like the Indian civilisation itself, has been content to discover the soul and surrender himself to its spontaneity.........An innocence, a simplicity that one does not find elsewhere in literature makes the birds and the leaves seem as near to him as they are near to children, and the changes of the seasons great events as before our thoughts had arisen between them and us." In this beautiful, passage the poet-critic brings home to us what perhaps is the most remarkable and loveable feature in Tagores genins. Tagore brings near to us

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what we have put far from us in our eager desire for possession, our many loves and hates, our unperceiving blindness of vision, our growing callousness and preoccupation with worldly things. The rearrangement of our inner perspective is a task more urgent and difficult now than before, because our narrowness and pettiness and selfishness are now more than ever before. Tagore embraces everything in his large and universal love, reveals to us the divine ties among things, shows the beauty and love of God shining forth everywhere, enlarges our limited and narrow selves, and brings the gift of peace and love and joy into our joyless, selfish, worldly hearts.

In various places in the *Gitanjali* Tagore allows us to have a glimpse into his ideal of poesy and his conception of a poet's function in life and his own peculiar mission and place in the universe. I have dealt more fully with these matters in my Introductory Chapter, and shall hence confine my observations on them here to the extent to which they bear on *Gitanjali*. He conceives of poesy as the bride of Love and values his art as a means of spiritual union with God. Though he is full of humility, he recognises at the same time how his art becomes beautiful and vital when in touch with God. He recognises how through his poetic intuition he has been enabled to see the beating of the very heart of the world. The fifteenth and sixteenth poems in the *Gitanjali*

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show how he realises his mission in a spirit of combined humility and dignity :

"I am here to sing thee songs. In this hall of thine I have a corner seat. In thy world I have no work to do ; my useless life can only break out in tunes without a purpose.

When the hour strikes for thy silent worship at the dark temple of midnight, command me, my master, to stand before thee to sing.

When in the morning air the golden harp is tuned, honour me, commanding my presence."

(Page 13).

"I have had my invitation to this world's festival and thus my life has been blessed. My eyes have seen and my ears have heard.

It was my part at this feast to play upon my instrument, and I have done all I could.

Now, I ask, has the time come at last when I may go in and see thy face and offer thee my silent salutation ?"

(Pages 13 & 14).

He knows that the fruition of all poesy is the love of God. He says : "From dawn till dusk I sit here before my door, and I know that of a sudden the happy moment will arrive when I shall see. In the meanwhile, I smile and I sīng all alone. In the meanwhie the air is filling with the perfume of promise." (Page 36).

He says again :

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"It was my songs that taught me all the lessons I ever learnt ; they showed me secret paths, they brought before my sight many a star on the horizon of my heart.

They guided me all the day long to the mysteries of the country of pleasure and pain, and at last, to what palace gate have they brought me in the evening at the end of my journey ?"

(Page 92).

He says again : "I put my tales of you into lasting songs. The secret gushes out from my heart."

Page 93).

Like a true poet he does not shut the gateway of the senses, but allows the heavenly radiance of the spirit to come in a flood through the senses. He says : "Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight... No. I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight. Yes, all my illusions will burn into illuminations of joy, and all my desires ripen into fruits of love."

(Page 68).

Tagore feels and says that poesy must be full of true and deep humility, and must not be enamoured of her robe of gold and her jewels and gems, because these will prevent her enjoying the final glory of her existence—communion with God. He says in the seventh poem in the *Gitanjali* :—

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"My song has put off her adornments. She has no pride of dress and decoration. Ornaments would mar our union; they would come between thee and me; their jinglings would drown thy whispers. My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight. O master poet, I have sat down at thy feet. Only let me make my life simple and straight, like a flute of reed for thee to fill with music."

(Page 6).

It is in this spirit of divine humility and self-surrender that he says: "I know thou takest pleasure in my singing. I know that only as a singer I come before thy presence. I touch by the edge of the far-spreading wing of my song thy feet which I could never aspire to reach. Drunk with the joy of singing, I forget myself and call thee friend who art my lord."

(Page 2).

He recognises how even the best poet is unable and unworthy to convey to the world God's harmonies.

He says: "My heart longs to join in thy song, but vainly struggles for a voice. I would speak, but speech breaks not into song, and I cry out baffled." Tagore points out how, when the poet-soul is surrendered to God in an ectasy of measureless love, God's melodies themselves sing through the soul.

"All that is harsh and dissonant in me melts into one sweet harmony, and my adoration spreads wings like a glad bird on its flight across the sea."

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(Page 2).

"My poet, is it thy delight to see thy creation through my eyes, and to stand at the portals of my ears silently to listen to thine own eternal harmony ?

"Thy world is weaving words in my mind, and thy joy is adding music to them. Thou givest thyself to me in love, and then feelest thine own entire sweetness in me."

(Page 61).

We may well expect how one who conceives so worthily and loftily of life will be full of lofty resolve and will lead a dedicated life. The following poem is full of the fragrance of fervour of the resolution.

"Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure, knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs.

I shall ever try to keep all untruths out from my thoughts, knowing that thou art that truth which has kindled the light of reason in my mind.

I shall ever try to drive all evils away from my heart and keep my love in flower, knowing that thou hast thy seat in the inmost shrine of my heart.

And it shall be my endeavour to reveal thee in my actions, knowing it is thy power gives me strength to act.

(Pages 3 & 4).

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Tagore's spiritual nature knows well that the loftiest resolutions do not take us very far in the path of achievement and of realisation of happiness without His grace. Hence we find in the *Gitanjali* beautiful lyrical gems shining with the radiant light of prayer for His love and grace. The following poems are worth reading and meditating upon every day:

> " Let only that little be left of me whereby I may name thee my all.
>
> Let only that little be left of my will whereby I may feel thee on every side, and come to thee in everything, and offer to thee my love every moment.
>
> Let only that little be left of me whereby I may never hide thee.
>
> Let only that little of my fetters be left whereby I am bound with thy will, and thy purpose is carried out in my life—and that is the fetter of thy love." (Pages 26 & 27).

> " This is my prayer to thee, my Lord—strike, strike at the root of penury in my heart.
>
> Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys and sorrows.
>
> Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service.
>
> Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might.

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Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles.
And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy will with love."

(Pages 28 & 29).

" When the heart is hard and parched up, come upon me with a shower of mercy.
When grace is lost from life, come with a burst of song.
When tumultuous work raises its din on all sides shutting me out from beyond, come to me, my lord of silence, with thy peace and rest.
When my beggarly heart sits crouched, shut up in a corner, break open the door, my King, and come with the ceremony of a King.
When desire blinds the mind with delusion and dust, O thou holy one, thou wakeful, come with thy light and thunder."

(Pages 30 & 31).

This prayerfulness of Tagore is wonderful not only for its sincerity, passion, and purity but is further remarkable in that it is in alliance with a lofty and pure and rational patriotism, and is not merely bent on seeking individual welfare but seeks to lift his beloved land into the heaven of a higher and holier life. He says :

" Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high ;
Where knowledge is free ;

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Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls ;
Where words come out from the depth of truth ;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection ;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit ;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action—
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake."

(Pages 27 & 28).

This poem gives us an insight into the poet's heart where we find an intense, pure, and lofty patriotism in rational combination with a burning love of humanity and a deep and rapturous love of God. It is well known that in ancient India when India occupied a lofty place in the scale of nations both materially and spiritually, such a combination existed. The divorce of these two great passions of the human heart has brought untold unhappiness on mankind both in India and the West. Tagore's message is to bring about the holy combination once again for the greater happiness of man and the greater glory of God.

The supreme function of a poet who is at the same time a saint and a philosopher is to put us in right relation to things, to throw light on the deep and divine mysteries of life and death, to reconcile and harmonise

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the seeming discords of life, to show to us the unity of Truth, Beauty, and Love, and to lead our souls in an ecstasy of adoration to the lotus feet of God. The most enduringly beautiful portions of the *Gitanjali* are those showing to us the poet's fundamental ideas on life and death, the need for love of God, and the means of attaining that goal. The very first poem in the *Gitanjali* shows to us the meaning and value of life in a beautiful and convincing manner, how the soul is immortal and is dowered by God with many lives to make it gather experience, become fitter for union with Him, and rise from partial perception and realisation of love and beauty in the universe to rejoicing for ever in His Infinite Beauty and Love. It says :

> "Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.
>
> This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new.
>
> At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable.
>
> Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill." (Page 1).

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It is an uplifting and delightful task to study the ideals of life as expressed in these thrilling poems of Tagore's, both because they show the innermost essence of his views of life, and because they bring home to us vividly what are the best ideals of a life well lived with a true perception of life's origin and destiny. As this is the most valuable portion of this most valuable book of poems, I shall deal with it at some length and with due elaboration, explaining Tagore's central ideas and teachings in my own words, and quoting from the poems here and there to enable the reader to realise the purpose of Tagore's great teachings.

In many places in this great book of poems, Tagore expresses in language full of the passion of Godward aspiration his keen desire for God-vision, and conveys to us the message that such desire is the crown and glory of life. All other aims are secondary, transitory, and worthless in comparison with this supreme aim of life. It is this lesson that the Upanishads teach again and again in golden sentences. It is this lesson that the great poets and saints and prophets of mankind have enforced from age to age. Sri Krishna says in the Gita :

यल्लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं मन्यते नाधिकं स्ततः ।
यस्मिंस्थितो न दुःखेन गुरुणाऽपि विचाल्यते ॥

(Having obtained which, the soul does not deem anything else as a sweeter or higher gain, and resting in which the soul is not shaken even by the deepest grief and sorrow).

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The Swetaswetara Upanishad says :

पतिं पतीनां परमं परस्तात्
विदामदेवं भुवनेशमीड्यं ॥

(Let us know and see Him who is the Lord of Lords who is farther than the farthest and higher than the highest, who is the Lord of the universe, and who is the object of all adoration).

This deep desire for God-vision as the sweetest thing in life and as the glory of the soul is expressed in many places in the *Gitanjali*. Tagore says :

" Away from the sight of thy face my heart knows no rest nor respite, and my work becomes an endless toil in a shoreless sea of toil ..... Now it is time to sit quiet, face to face with thee, and to sing dedication of life in this silent and overflowing leisure. " (Pages 4-5)

" If thou showeth me not thy face, if thou leavest me wholly aside, I know not how I am to pass these long, rainy hours,"

(Page 15).

" That I want thee, only thee,—let my heart repeat without end. All desires that distract me day and night, are false and empty to the core."

(Page 29).

" Day after day, O lord of my life, shall I stand before thee face to face ? With folded hands, O Lord of all worlds, shall I stand before thee face to face ?" (Page 70).

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Tagore points out how this crown of life is to be won after a great deal of preparation of the inner life and after fulness of experience is acquired sweetening the soul and purifying the heart. He says : " The traveller has to knock at every alien door to come to his own, and one has to wonder through all the outer worlds to reach the inner-most shrine at the end." (Page 10).

Many an apparent failure has to be suffered in the course of such an infinite compass of experience. This feeling is exquisitely expressed in the following wonderful poem :

" The song that I came to sing remains unsung to this day.
I have spent my days in stringing and unstringing my instrument.
The time has not come true, the words have not been rightly set ; only there is the agony of wishing in my heart.
The blossom has not opened ; only the wind is sighing by.
I have not seen his face, nor have I listened to his voice ; only I have heard his gentle foot-steps from the road before my house.
The live-long day has passed in spreading his seat upon the floor ; but the lamp has not been lit, and I cannot ask him into my house.
I live in the hope of meeting with him ; but this meeting is not yet." (Page 11).

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Tagore shows that there is a large and luminous element of hope in such apparent failure. He says :

> " Day by day thou art making me worthy of thy full acceptance by refusing me ever and anon, saving me from perils of weak, uncertain desire.
>
> (Page 12).

There is also comfort and joy in the golden assurance that God's grace will surely come. Tagore is never weary of showing us this great truth. He says :

> " The morning will surely come, the darkness will vanish, and thy voice pour down in golden streams breaking through the sky". (Page 16).

Again, he says :

> " If I call not thee in my prayers, if I keep not thee in my heart, thy love for me still waits for my love." (Page 26).

He shows how God yearns to lead the human soul to the heaven of his love. (See the 68th and 83rd poems). In another poem, he says :

> " From dawn till dusk I sit here before my door, and I know that of a sudden the happy moment will arrive when I shall see. In the meanwhile, I smile and I sing all alone. In the meanwhile the air is filling with the perfume of promise."
>
> (Page 36).

Again,

> " Have you not heard his silent steps? He comes, comes, ever comes." (Page 36).

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"In sorrow after sorrow it is his steps that press upon my heart, and it is the golden touch of his feet that makes my joy to shine."

(Page 37).

In another beautiful poem, he says :

"I know not from what distant time thou art ever coming nearer to meet me. Thy sun and stars can never keep thee hidden from me for aye......I know not why to-day my life is all astir, and a feeling of tremulous joy is passing through my heart. It is as if the time were come to wind up my work, and I feel in the air a faint smell of thy sweet presence." (Pages 37 & 38).

Again, he says :

"Time is endless in thy hands, my lord. At the end of the day I hasten in fear lest thy gate be shut ; but I find that yet there is time."

(Page 76).

The sweetness born in the soul owing to the grace of God is not something that comes to us from without, but is only an inner fragrant blossoming. The poet says :

"I knew not then that it was so near, that it was mine, and that this perfect sweetness had blossomed in the depth of my own heart."

(Page 17).

This meeting of God and man in the temple of the heart has a dual movement as its cause. On the one

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hand the human soul moves towards God yearningly and gladly. The poet says :

"At the end of the stony path, in the country of virgin solitude, my friend is sitting all alone. Deceive him not. Wake, oh awaken ! . . . . Is there no joy in the deep of your heart ? At every footfall of yours, will not the harp of the road break out in sweet music of pain ?".

(Pages 50 & 51).

On the other hand, God's love yearns for us and moves towards us. The poet asks in the next poem :

" Thus it is that thy joy in me is full. Thus it is that thou hast come down to me, O thou Lord of all heavens, where would be thy love if I were not ?" (Page 51).

A welknown verse in Sanskrit says :

विधिनाऽहं न सृष्टश्चेन्नस्यात्तव दयालुता ।
आमयोनैव सृष्टश्चेदौषधस्य वृथोदयः ॥

(If I had not been made to reincarnate by fate, how couldst thou be called the Lord of Mercy ? If there were no diseases, the birth of medicinal plants would be futile).

We must be ever prepared for His coming. And when He comes, what shall we give Him ? The least that we give Him is honoured and made divine by His acceptance. The poet says :

" I was confused and stood undecided, and then

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from my wallet I slowly took out the least little grain of corn and gave it to thee. But how great my surprise when at the day's end I emptied my bag on the floor to find a least little grain of gold among the poor heap. I bitterly wept and wished that I had had the heart to give thee my all.'

The poet thus shows that the human soul must give up every thing in a passion of ecstasy and love when God's love which is life's crown comes to it to gladden and glorify it for ever.

This heavenly consummation of a human life in loving God and having the vision of divine beauty as an abiding presence in the temple of the heart, can be had only through the attainment of certain negative and positive virtues, qualities, and faculties. The first quality required is a certain detachment from earthly desires (*Vairagya*). This virtue is hard to secure as a permanent inner possession.

The poet says in a beautiful poem :

"Obstinate are the trammels, but my heart aches when I try to break them.

Freedom is all I want, but to hope for it I feel ashamed.

I am certain that priceless wealth is in thee, and that thou art my best friend, but I have not the heart to sweep away the tinsel that fills my room.

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The shroud that covers me is a shroud of dust and death ; I hate it, yet hug it in love.

My debts are large, my failures great, my shame secret and heavy ; yet when I come to ask for my good, I quake in fear lest my prayer be granted." (Pages 22 & 23).

It is only through the Mercy and Grace of God that the fleeting sense of detachment from low earthly desires for *our* comfort and *our* pleasure becomes a permanent possession. In the *Vishnu Purana* occurs the following gem of a prayer.

" या प्रीतिरविवेकानां विषयेष्व नपायिनी ।
त्वामनुस्मरतस्सा मे हृदयान्नापसर्पतु ॥

(O Lord, ordain that from my heart may never depart my deep love for you—love as deep and as continuous as the love that the worldly persons feel for the objects of worldly desire).

Tagore recognises how we persistently shut out light and love and grace by increasing our desires and indulging in our passions. In poem after poem in *Gitanjali* we see this fact brought out in golden verses. He says :

" He whom I enclose with my name is weeping in this dungeon. I am ever busy building this wall all round ; and as this wall goes up into the sky day by day, I lose sight of my true being in its dark shadow." (Page 23).

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"I thought I could outdo every body in the world in wealth and power, and I amassed in my own treasure-house the money due to my king. When sleep overcame me I lay upon the bed that was for my lord, and on waking up I found I was a prisoner in my own treasure-house." (Page 24).

"Thus night and day I worked at the chain with huge fires and cruel hard strokes. When at last the work was done and the links were complete and unbreakable, I found that it held me in its grip."

Another negative quality required is the avoidance of too much mingling with the world. God-lovers have to mingle with the world-lovers to save these and uplift them into the radiance of the love of God, but they will find themselves dragged down if they mingle too much with the latter. The poet says of these,

"When it was day they came into my house and said, 'we shall only take the smallest room here.'

They said, 'we shall help you in the worship of your God and humbly accept our own share of his grace", and then they took their seat in a corner and they sat quiet and meek.

But in the darkness of night I find they break into my sacred shrine, strong and turbulent, and snatch with untidy greed the offerings from 'God's altar." (Page 26).

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Again,

> "Where dost thou stand behind them all, my lover, hiding thyself in the shadows? They push thee and pass thee by on the dusty road, taking thee for naught. I wait here weary hours spreading my offerings for thee, while passers-by come and take my flowers, one by one, and my basket is nearly empty."
>
> (Page 32).

Another quality to be sedulously cultivated is the feeling that worldly honour, riches, and joys when they come are nothing, and that the only possession worth having is the joy of the love of God. In the 79th poem in the *Gitanjali*, the poet prays:

> "As my days pass in the crowded market of this world and my hands grow full with the daily profit, let me ever feel that I have gained nothing—let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours."
>
> (Page 73).

> "When my rooms have been decked out and the flutes sound and the laughter there is loud, let me ever feel that I have not invited thee to my house—let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this great sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours."
>
> (Page 74).

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Such are some of the negative qualities and faculties to be brought into existence to fit ourselves for the attainment of the true consummation of life. The achievement of positive qualities and faculties is an equally urgent and indispensable pre-requisite, and the *Gitanjali* gives us precious truths on this matter also. The first quality required is a keen hunger and passion for God-vision. The poet says :

> " He came when the night was still ; he had his harp in his hands, and my dreams became resonant with its melodies.
>
> Alas, why are my nights all thus lost ? Ah, why do I ever miss his sight whose breath touches my sleep ?" (Pages 20 and 21).

When partial vision comes to us, our craving for more light should become more, and our courage in its pursuit more invincible. The poet cries out :

> " Light, Oh where is the light ? Kindle it with the burning fire of desire ! ... A moment's flash of lightning drags down a deeper gloom on my sight, and my heart gropes for the path to where the music of the night calls me ...... Let not the hours pass by in the dark. Kindle the lamp of love with thy life." (Pages 21-22).

Another faculty to be acquired is the faculty of service of God. The poet says :

> " Pluck this little flower and take it, delay not ! ... Though its colour be not deep and its smell

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> be faint, use this flower in thy service and pluck it while there is time." (Page 5).

The soul must acquire also an utter humility and the joy of self-surrender. The seventh poem in the *Gitanjali*, which has been quoted above, shows this admirably. The poet says:

"Leave all the burdens on his hands who can bear all, never look behind with regret." (Page 7).

Again, the soul must seek to serve God not by flying away from life, but by serving and loving His children. The poet enforces this lesson again and again

> "Mother, it is no gain, thy bondage of finery, if it keep one shut off from the healthful dust of the earth, if it rob one of the right of entrance to the great fair of common human life." (Page 7).

> "When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost." (Page 8).

> "Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!
>
> He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground, and where the pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower,

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and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!

Deliverance! Where is this deliverance to be found? Our Master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us all for ever."

(Pages 8 and 9).

In the thirtieth poem Tagore shows the need for a life of spacious leisure and secluded meditation. Tagore shows us further that we must feel ourselves to be the children of God and regain the child-like qualities of wonder, innocence, trustfulness, joy, and love if we are to attain the kingdom of God that is in us. He enforces the same lesson that Christ taught when he said: "Verily I say unto you, except ye turn and be come as little children, ye shall in nowise enter into the kingdom of heaven." (John iii 3,5,8). Poems 60 to 62 in the *Gitanjali* are child-poems and are found also in *The Crescent Moon*, and their inclusion in the *Gitanjali* is to impress on our hearts the great truth above said.

Tagore shows us in verses full of beauty and spiritual passion what raptures and powers come to us when we become dowered with God's grace, the attainment of which is the crown and glory of life. He beautifully describes God's grace as the dark-hued and benignant cloud that sends down gracious showers of joy and love to the arid parched-up heart. In the

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fortieth poem he says : " Let the cloud of grace bend low from above like the tearful look of the mother on the day of the father's wrath." This is a simile which occurs very often in Sanscrit devotional verses where God is described as the *Neela Megha* (the dark rain-cloud) lit up by the twin rainbows of mercy and grace and pouring down showers of love. The poet realises also another aspect of God-head. He shows us how we are not merely passive recipients of His grace but are to fight His battles in the world as His servants. The true lover further beholds God's love and mercy even in the punishments that God sends to him. The poems in which Tagore shows these great truths to us are full of a lofty and profound symbolism. He says :

> " Ah me, what is it I find ? What token left of thy love ? It is no flower, no spices, no vase of perfumed water. It is thy mighty sword, flashing as a flame, heavy as a bolt of thunder. .... From now I leave off all petty decorations......thou hast given me thy sword for adornment ... .."

(Pages 46-48). (See also pages 78 and 79)

The coming of God's grace is the theme of many of a poem full of deep spiritual rapture. The poet says :

> " Entering my heart unbidden even as one of the common crowd, unknown to me, my king, thou didst press the signet of eternity upon many a fleeting moment of my life." (Page 35).

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"At last, when I woke from my slumber and opened my eyes, I saw thee standing by me, flooding my sleep with thy smile."

(Page 41).

"I was singing all alone in a corner, and the melody caught your ear. You came down and stood at my cottage door."

(Page 42).

Such coming of God's grace is the true joy of life. The following prayer of the poet is full of truth and beauty.

"Let him appear before my sight as the first of all lights and all forms. The first thrill of joy to my awakened soul, let it come from his glance. And let my return to myself be immediate return to him."

(Page 39).

When the human soul rests in Infinite Beauty it becomes full of peace, rapture, and harmony, and new melodies of the scheme of things become revealed to it. Emerson says: "From within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things, and makes us aware that we are nothing, but the light is all.........when it breathes through the intellect, it is genius; when it breathes through the will, it is virtue; when it flows through the affections, it is love. And the blindness of the intellect begins, when it would be something of

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itself. The weakness of the will begins, when the individual would be something of himself. All reform aims, in some one particular, to let the soul have its way through us ; in other words, to engage us to obey." The poet describes in exquisite verses the new faculties and joys that come to us when God's grace becomes our heavenly dower :

> " But I find that thy will knows no end in me. And when old words die out on the tongue, new melodies break forth from the heart ; and where the old tracks are lost, new country is revealed with its wonders."
>
> (Page 29).

Through the love of God we attain the love of all, because the two loves are inseparable. The poet says :

> " Thou hast made me known to friends whom I knew not. Thou hast given me seats in homes not my own. Thou hast brought the distant near, and made a brother of the stranger...... when one knows thee, then alien there is none, then no door is shut."
>
> (Pages 58 and 59).

The poet shows us further that love of God leads us to live a dedicated life. This is the idea pervading the sixty-fourth poem. It is then that the soul rises on the wings of its surrendered will to that close union with God wherein it becomes divine itself. The poet asks in exultant rapture :

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"What divine drink wouldst thou have, my God, from this overflowing cup of my life ?

My poet, is it thy delight to see thy creation through my eyes and to stand at the portals of my ears silently to listen to thine own eternal harmony ?

Thy world is weaving words in my mind and thy joy is adding music to them. Thou givest thyself to me in love and thou feelest thine own entire sweetness in me."

(Page 61).

Looking at the cosmic scheme of things from this lofty and divine standpoint, Tagore is able to perceive and realise and communicate profound spiritual truths and to see and make us see the divine significance of life and its myriad incidents which to ordinary worldly eyes have no value or purpose. In the daily revelation of light, he sees the grace and love and joy of God manifested. He says.

"The light is scattered into gold on every cloud, my darling, and it scatters gems in profusion. Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling, and gladness without measure. The heaven's river has drowned its banks and the flood of joy is abroad."

(Pages 52 and 53).

The same truth is declared by the Upanishads :

"आनन्दादेव खल्विमानि भूतानिजायन्ते"

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('Verily from the everlasting joy do all objects have their birth)'. Another truth that the poet realises is about the character of the soul as the bride of God.

> " She who ever had remained in the depth of my being, in the twilight of gleams and of glimpses; she who never opened her veils in the morning light will be my last gift to thee, my God, folded in my final song.... There was none in the world who ever saw her face to face, and she remained in her loneliness waiting for thy recognition."

(Pages 61 and 62).

Tagore makes us see also that the manifested beauty of God in the universe is but a portion of his Infinite Beauty.

> ' Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well. O thou beautiful, there in the nest it is thy love that encloses the soul with colours, sounds and odours ....
>
> " But there, where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flight in, reigns the stainless white radiance. There is no day nor night, nor form nor colour, and never, never a word."

(Pages 62 and 63).

The prism of His love refracts His white glory into the paradise of colours known as the world, but who can describe the white radiance of His glory? The Upanishads declare :

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पादोऽस्य विश्वाभूतानि त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवि ॥

(A portion of Him is the universe: The remainder is shining immortal beyond). Tagore teaches us the unity of life. He says: "The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures." (Page 64).

Yet this unity is full of an infinite variety. He teaches further how the soul is a part of the Divine Being. The following passage is full of the deepest spiritual truth :—

> "Thou settest a barrier in thine own being and then callest thy severed self in myriad notes. This the self-separation has taken body in me .... The great pageant of thee and me has overspread the sky. With the tune of thee and me all the air is vibrant, and all ages pass with the hiding and seeking of thee and me."

(Pages 66 and 67).

God is the lord of life and the goal of life is to meet the divine musician playing on the flute of the world. The poet says :

> "He it is who puts his enchantment upon these eyes and joyfully plays on the chords of my heart in varied cadence of pleasure and pain ....There, at the fording, in the little boat the unknown man plays upon his lute."

Pages 67 and 69.)

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Everything serves and glorifies Him.

"Thy gifts to us, mortals, fulfil all our needs and yet run back to thee undiminished."

(Page 69).

God is not only Lord and King of our souls, but is our friend and lover and brother. He is to be reached by loving our human brothers. The poet says :

> " In pleasure and in pain I stand not by the side of men and thus stand by thee. I shrink not to give up my life, and thus do not plunge into the great waters of life." (Pages 71 and 72).

Our sense of imperfection is only an illusion. " Unbroken perfection is over all."

(Page 73).

We reach the Infinite Beauty and Joy and Perfection by self-surrender and love. " Thou hast taken every moment of my life in thine own hands."

(Page 75).

" Full many an hour have I spent in the strife of the good and the evil, but now it is the pleasure of my playmate of the empty days to draw my heart on to him."

(Pages 82 and 83)

Then is the true consummation of life reached and the soul attains " the peace that passeth all understanding."

Tagore not merely tells us the meaning and crown and fruition of life, but throws the light of his pure

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soul on the mystery of death and shows us the true meaning of death. The poems on death in the *Gitanjali* are various and variously beautiful. In one poem he says :

" If the day is done, if birds sing no more, if wind has flagged tired, then draw the veil of darkness thick upon me, even as thou hast wrapt the earth with the coverlet of sleep and tenderly closed the petals of the drooping lotus at dusk."

(Page 19).

" Death, thy servant, is at my door. .... I will worship him with folded hands and with tears. I will worship him placing at his feet the treasure of my heart.'

(Page 79).

God's love sends death to us, so that when our senses and faculties become incapacitated and unfit to bring home to our souls divine messages to train them, we may be gently divested of the worn-out garment of the body and reclothed in a better and fitter frame. The poet says :

" On the day when death will knock at thy door, what wilt thou offer to him ?

Oh, I will set before my guest the full vessel of my life—I will never let him go with empty hands."

(Page 83).

" The flowers have been woven and the garland is ready for the bridegroom. After the wedding

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the bride shall leave her home and meet her lord alone in the solitude of night."

(Page 84).

"I have got my leave. Bid me farewell, my brothers! I bow to you all, and take my departure.

Here I give back the keys of my door—and I give up all claims to my house. I only ask for last kind words from you.

We were neighbours for long, but I received more than I could give. Now the day has dawned and the lamp that lit my dark corner is out. A summons has come, and I am ready for my journey."

(Pages 85 and 86).

"The child cries out when from the right breast the mother takes it away, in the very next moment to find in the left one its consolation."

(Page 87).

There is an exquisite quatrain of Landor's where he says:

> I strove with none, for none was worth my strife;
> Nature I loved, and next to Nature, Art.
> I warmed both hand's before the fire of life.
> It sinks and I am ready to depart.

The 96th poem in the *Gitanjali* is equally exquisite and deserves to be read again and again and shows what our attitude should be towards life and death.

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"When I go from hence let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable.
I have tasted of the hidden honey of this lotus that expands on the ocean of light, and thus am I blessed—let this be my parting word. In this play house of infinite forms I have had my play and here have I caught sight of him that is formless.
My whole body and my limbs have thrilled with his touch, who is beyond touch; and if the end comes here, let it come—let this be my parting word."

(Page 88).

I cannot conclude this all-too-brief and imperfect study of this epoch-making book of poems better than by putting side by side two wonderful poems—one by Tennyson and the other by Tagore—two great poets who are as great seers as they are singers, who have touched life at all points without losing their view of heaven, who have mingled service and meditation, who have risen through sorrow into a divine peace, and who have dowered us with a deeper vision of the scheme of things.

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,
But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,

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When that which drew from out the boundless deep,
 Turns again home.
Twilight and evening bell,
 And after that the dark,
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
 When I embark ;
For tho' from out the bourne of Time and Place
 The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
 When I have to cross the bar.

Tennyson.

"Early in the day it was whispered that we should sail in a boat, only thou and I, and never a soul in the world would know of this our pilgrimage, to no country and to no end.

In that shoreless ocean, at thy silently listening smile my songs would swell in melodies, free as waves, free from all bondage of words.

Is the time not come yet ? Are there works still to do ? Lo, the evening has come down upon the shore and in the fading light the sea-birds come flying to their rests.

Who knows when the chains will be off, and the boat, like the last glimmer of sunset, vanish into the night ?"

(Tagore's *Gitanjali*, page 34).

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CHAPTER III.

THE GARDENER.

This book of poems is full of varied beauty and emotional appeal, and if the *Gitanjali* belongs to the golden evening of life, the *Gardener* assuredly belongs to its rosy dawn and its meridian splendour. It contains exquisite love-poetry, beautiful nature-lyrics, and lofty devotional poems, and is as remarkable for its simplicity, spontaneity, and freshness as for its fulness of colour and melody. The poems contained in it were written during Tagore's youth and manhood and were published in three volumes—*Sonar Tari*, *Manasi*, and *Chitra*. They express in their passionate longing, their ecstasy in the contemplation of the spiritual elements of beauty, and their pure glow of feeling, mingling human and divine love, the very soul of Indian music. I have shown in the Introductory Chapter the close union of poesy and music in the art of Tagore. In the *Gardener* even more than in other poems the musical *motif* with its aids by way of refrains, rhythms, and rapid movement lifts the poet on the wings of melody to the loftiest summits of rapture. The poet cries out in the fifth poem.

> " I am restless, I am athirst for far-away things,
> My soul goes out in a longing to touch the skirts of the dim distance,

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O Great Beyond, O the keen call of thy flute !"

(Page 12).

The above-said qualities of this book of poems can be understood in the fulness of their divine beauty when we realise in what close spiritual kinship Tagore stands to Chaitanya, Mira Bai, and other great souls who were saints, musicians, poets, and lovers of God. I have dealt with this aspect also fully in my Introductory Chapter.

My method in studying this book of poems—marvellous in its sweetness, its universality, its simplicity, and its varied beauty—will be the same as that which I have adopted in studying the *Gitanjali*—to express the deepest and most fundamental ideas of Tagore in their inner and logical sequence and connection, quoting from the book here and there to illustrate the ideas.

The first group of poems to be studied with love and insight is that dealing with poesy in itself, in relation to life, in relation to love, and in relation to the divine elements in life and love. They are of surpassing beauty and profound symbolism, and are not rivalled anywhere in their truth to the deepest things of life, their insight, and their loveliness of form. The first seven poems especially deserve to be studied and pondered over in an ecstasy of joyful tears, which spring to our eyes unbidden at the revelation of beauty and grace and love and joy in life. The very first poem strikes a lofty note and shows the poetic beauty and appropriateness

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of the name the *Gardener.* Every line in it is full of inner significance. It will be impossible to expand here the ideas contained in every sentence, though such a task is delightful, uplifting, and worthy. I shall do the work on a more suitable occasion if there be any call for it. The very opening of the poem that describes how the poet comes to the queen after all the other servants are gone, shows how the attainment of the divine joys of poesy is the last and highest thing to which the spirit of man can attain. The servant (*viz.*, the poet) tells the queen:

> " When you have finished with others, that is my time."

(Page 1).

What does he want to do ? How shall I express the divine beauty of his request !

> " Make me the gardener of your flower garden . . . I will give up my other work. I throw my swords and lances down in the dust. Do not send me to distant courts : do not bid me undertake new conquests. But make me the gardener of your flower garden."

He desires only to dwell amid the heavenly fragrance of divine thoughts and emotions. What further work need he do ? The work of material progress, nay, even the work of service of man in the lower fields of activity—he has left far behind. He does not want to be sent even in her service away from the sight of her

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divine face and form. Why should he vex his soul with further conquests over nature when he has transcended that phase of being and has had a glimpse of her face in her very throne? The queen asks him what his duties would be. He replies that he would "keep fresh the grassy path where you walk in the morning, *where your feet will be greeted with praise at every step by the flowers eager for death*," swing her in a swing, "replenish with scented oil the lamp that burns by your bedside," and "decorate your footstool with sandal and saffron paste with wondrous designs." Thus when the human soul has come into the presence of her Eternal Lover, what further duties has she except to serve Him and rejoice in His joy? The remaining portion of the poem is equally beautiful.

"QUEEN.

What will you have for your reward?

SERVANT.

To be allowed to hold your little fists like tender lotus buds and slip flower-chains over your wrists; to tinge the soles of your feet with the red juice of *ashoka* petals and kiss away the speck of dust that may chance to linger there.

QUEEN.

Your prayers are granted, my servant, you will be the gardener of my flower garden."

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The second poem is full of the loftiest truths and makes us see how a poet and lover of God, though he has transcended the lower forms of work—*viz.*, conquests over nature and service of man through lower motives—serves his Goddess best by not merely rejoicing in her worship, her beauty, and her love, but by serving humanity unselfishly and through higher motives, by voicing the sweetest human emotions and conveying the messages of his Goddess to man, and by seeking to lift up all to the inner paradise where he lives and moves and has his being. I find it difficult to resist the temptation to explain each sentence in this poem, so full of deep inner meaning throughout; but I have to resist the temptation, having regard to the limits of space and to the fitness of things according to the scheme of this work. The poet should not merely hear the music of the hereafter and be dumb. He says :

> "I watch if young straying hearts meet together, and two pairs of eager eyes beg for music to break their silence and speak for them.
>
> Who is there to weave their passionate songs, if I sit on the shore of life and contemplate death and the beyond ?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> If some wanderer, leaving home, come here to watch the night and with bowed head listen to the murmur of the darkness, *who is there to*

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whisper the secrets of life into his ears if I, shutting my doors, should try to free myself from mortal bonds?"

"It is a trifle that my hair is turning gray.

I am ever as young or as old as the youngest and the oldest of this village.

. . . . . .

They all have need for me, and I have no time to brood over the after-life."

(Pages 4—6).

The third poem is full of profound symbolism, and it is with hesitation that I offer here a few hints about it though I have meditated on it often. It seems to show that poems though iridescent with fancy and imagination are not valuable in the eyes of the Goddess, even though humanity is fascinated by their beauty, if they are born merely from the sea of the poet's own imagination and are not the result of an inner struggle with the lower elements of nature and are not in vital touch with life and its aspirations and desires and joys. The poet shows in the fourth poem how he cannot keep away his brethren from the home of his heart even if they have only imperfect sympathy for him and though he would fain live on the lofty heights of meditative rapture. At the same time the poet hears the imperious call of the flute of the Great Beyond and his innermost nature responds to the call with a sudden leap of the spirit. It says:

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"Thy breath comes to me whispering an impossible hope.
Thy tongue is known to my heart as its very own.

. . . . . .

I am listless, I am a wanderer in my heart . . . .
O Farthest end, O the keen call of thy flute!
I forget, I ever forget, that the gates are shut ever more in the house where I dwell alone!"

(Pages 12-13).

In the sixth poem the poet shows by the simile of the caged bird and the free bird, how the call of love moves the soul imprisoned in matter, though the latter bemoans its inability to escape from the cage and soar wing to wing with the free bird *viz.*, the Ever-Free, Ever-Joyful World-Soul which is Love and yearns to teach the caged spirit to soar into the pure empyrean of love on the wings of peace and joy. In the seventh poem the simile of the maiden and the prince shows how poesy serves the God of Love for His sweet sake whether he lifts his eyes to her in love or not. She flings "the jewel from her breast" beneath his moving car, not caring whether he or any one else knows her utter self-surrender or not, and realising that such ecstasy of devotion is an end in itself and is the sweetest and truest thing in life. In another poem Tagore shows how poetry should be rooted in the earth though its finest blossoms may lift up their heads in the serene air of love and light, rejoice in the sunshine

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of divine hope, and sweeten everything with their fragrance. He says :

" Infinite wealth is not yours, my patient and dusky mother dust !

. . . . .

The gift of gladness that you have for us is never perfect.

. . . . .

You cannot satisfy all our hungry hopes, but should I desert you for that ?

Your smile which is shadowed with pain is sweet to my eyes.

Your love which knows not fulfilment is dear to my heart.

. . . . .

Over your creations of beauty there is the mist of tears.

I will pour my songs into your mute heart, and my love into your love.

I will worship you with labour. I have seen your tender face and I love your mournful dust, Mother Earth." (Pages 127-8).

I shall refer here to only two other poems that show the attitude of the poet towards posterity. It shows that a poet's highest reward is not fame or worldly possessions but the perpetual rebirth of joy in the hearts of living men and women of successive generations. Tagore says in the last poem in the *Gardener* :

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"Who are you, reader, reading my poems an hundred years hence?
I cannot send you one single flower from this wealth of the spring,one single streak of gold from yonder clouds.

. . . .

In the joy of your heart may you feel the living joy that sang one spring morning, sending its glad voice across an hundred years."

(Page 146).

Tagore recognises and proclaims the supreme dignity and beauty of the poet's art in words full of beauty.

"In the world's audience hall, the simple blade of grass sits on the same carpet with the sunbeam and the stars of midnight.
Thus my songs share their seats in the heart of the world with the music of clouds and forests.
But you, man of riches, your wealth has no part in the simple grandeur of the sun's glad gold and the mellow gleam of the musing moon.
The blessing of the all-embracing sky is not shed upon it.
And when death appears, it pales and withers and crumbles into dust."

(Page 129).

It is a natural transition from poesy to love, and we cannot better study the wonderful love-poems in his volume than by studying at the outset the poems describ-

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ing the attitude of a poet towards love. The poet asks the lover to reveal his heart to him.

> "Do not keep to yourself the secret of your heart, my friend!
>
> Say it to me, only to me, in secret. You who smile so gently, softly whisper, my heart will hear it, not my ears."
>
> (Page 48).
>
> "Youth, why do you stand so still under the shadow of the tree?
>
> My feet are languid with the burden of my heart and I stand still in the shadow."
>
> (Page 49).

The poems where the poet lays bare his soul to his beloved are equally beautiful and disclose to us the true relations of poesy and love. In one poem the poet asks love to allow him to soar into the higher regions of thought and emotion.

> "My heart, the bird of the wilderness, has found its sky in your eyes. They are the cradle of the morning, they are the kingdom of the stars. My songs are lost in their depths. Let me but soar in that sky, in its lonely immensity.
>
> Let me but cleave its clouds and spread wings in its sunshine." (Page 60).

In another poem the poet tells his beloved that he had given his love to the world and that it was too late for him to concentrate it on one personality.

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"It is too late to ask my heart in return for yours.
There was a time when my life was like a bud, all its perfume was stored in its core.
Now it is squandered far and wide. Who knows the enchantment that can gather and shut it up again?
My heart is not mine to give to one only, it is given to the many."

(Page 68).

That is the note of the singer who has truly risen to the raptures of the love of All, the lover whose beloved is the soul of the world. A poet who has not fully risen to this beatitude must necessarily feel that love is more than the joy of poesy or fame.

"My love, once upon a time your poet launched a great epic in his mind.
Alas, I was not careful, and it struck your ringing anklets and came to grief.

. . . . .

You must make this loss good to me, my love.
If my claims to immortal fame after death are shattered, make me immortal while I live.
And I will not mourn for my loss nor blame you."

(Page 69).

Similarly did Byron say:

'O talk not to me of a name great in story;
The days of our youth are the days of our glory;
And the myrtle and ivy of sweet two-and-twenty

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Are worth all your laurels though ever so plenty.

. . . . . .

Oh Fame !—If I e'er took delight in thy praises,
'Twas less for the sake of thy high-sounding phrases,
Than to see the bright eyes of the dear one discover
The thought I was not unworthy to love her.
There chiefly I sought thee, there only I found thee ;
Her glance was the best of the rays that surround thee;
When it sparkled o'er aught that was bright in my story ,
I knew it was love, and I felt it was glory.',

Our poet realises how his art becomes voicelesss in the sweetness of his love as a bee in the lotus.

"I try to sing a song, but in vain. A hidden smile trembles on your lips ; ask of it the reason of my failure.

Let your smiling lips say on oath how my voice lost itself in silence like a drunken bee in the lotus."

(Page 70).

" If you would have it so, I will end my singing."

(Page 84).

I shall first refer now to the sweet love-poems in this volume dealing with love in its variety of charm, and then to the poems particularly dealing with Indian life and love, before I discuss the wonderful poems dealing with love in its manifold relation to life and finally rising on the wings of truth and joy into the highest heaven of divine love. The

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general love-poems in this book are exquisite and perfect lyrical gems. The eighth poem describes how a maiden's love is shy though deep. Another poem describes maidenly shyness shining in its fulness of charm even when love has triumphed over it.

> " When my love comes and sits by my side, when my body trembles, and my eyelids droop, the night darkens, the wind blows out the lamp, and the clouds draw veils over the stars.
>
> It is the jewel at my breast that shines and gives light. I do not know how to hide it."

(Pages 20-21).

The sixteenth poem shows the elemental nature of love—its immediateness, its simplicity, and its touch with life.

> " It is a game of giving and withholding, revealing and screening again ; some smiles and some little shyness, and some sweet useless struggles.
>
> This love between you and me is simple as a song.
>
> No mystery beyond the present ; no striving for the impossible ; no shadow behind the charm ; no groping in the depth of the dark.
>
> . . . . .
>
> We have not crushed the joy to the utmost to wring from it the wine of pain.
>
> This love between you and me is simple as a song."

(Pages 36-37).

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Another poem shows that love, the mendicant, in spite of his seeming humility, begs for nothing less than the whole of our personality.

" ' What comes from your willing hands I take. I beg for nothing more.'

'Yes, yes, I know you, modest mendicant, you ask for all that one has'."

(Page 51).

At the same time there is no doubt that this ecstasy of perfect self-surrender in a passion of adoration is the truest, highest, sweetest thing in life.

" The lotus blooms in the sight of the sun, and loses all that it has. It would not remain in bud in the eternal winter mist."

(Pages 53-4).

Another poem beautifully says :

" I love you, beloved ; forgive me, my love.
Like a bird losing its way I am caught.
When my heart was shaken it lost its veil and was naked. Cover it with pity, beloved, and forgive me, my love."

(Page 63).

The prayer of love for the ecstasy of possession can never be better expressed than it is in the thirty-fourth poem.

" Could I but entangle your feet with my heart and hold them fast to my breast !"

(Page 65).

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A lover though he says that he will leave his beloved will return to her feet with renewed rapture.

> "When I say I leave you for all time, accept it as true, and let a mist of tears for one moment deepen the dark rim of your eyes.
> Then smile as archly as you like when I come again."

(Pages 71-2).

The love-poems in this volume that depict love as manifested in Indian life are of peculiar attractiveness and charm. I must not omit to mention here one peculiar feature frequently noticed in regard to Indian love-poetry, *viz.*, its exquisite setting amid the sweetest natural scenes. As I have pointed out in my essay on some characteristics of Sanskrit poetry: "Nature plays an important part in Sanskrit lyrics: the lotus, the moon, and the kokila, are met with frequently. The love scenes are placed amidst the enchanting spots in nature, in scenes lit up by bright blossoms shining like many-coloured moons, where gentle winds come laden with strange perfumes, vocal with the sounds of tuneful-throated birds." The tenth poem and the eleventh poem describe how a bashful Indian bride is asked to go and meet the guest at the gate and bring him in. The wonderful beauty of these poems is their suggestiveness in which a diviner atmosphere seems somehow to interpenetrate the human universe.

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"Have no word with him if you are shy; stand aside by the door when you meet him.

. . . . .

Have you not put the red lucky mark at the parting of your hair, and done your toilet for the night? O bride, do you hear, the guest has come? Let your work be!" (Pages 22-23.)

"Who can know that your eyelids have not been touched with lamp-black? For your eyes are darker than rain-clouds.

. . . . .

Come as you are, do not loiter over your toilet."

(Page 25).

These and other poems dealing with Indian life and love bring home to us vividly and lovingly the heaven of a happy woman's life and ways in India and the heaven of nature shining all about her as a fitting temple for love, the goddess of her heart. The twelfth poem contains the song of the lake to the beloved and shows these traits very well.

"If you would be busy and fill your pitcher, come, O come to my lake.

The water will cling round your feet and babble its secret. . . . .

I know well the rhythm of your steps, they are beating in my heart. . . . .

Your thoughts will stray out of your dark eyes like birds from their nests." (Pages 27 & 28).

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The next poem brings before our eyes another sweet picture of Indian life and love.

> " Under the banyan tree you were milking the cow with your hands, tender and fresh as butter.
>
> And I was standing still.
>
> I did not say a word. It was the bird that sang unseen from the thicket.
>
> The mango tree was shedding its flowers upon the village road, and the bees came humming one by one." (Page 30).

The whole poem is so inexpressibly sweet that one could imagine it sung by Krishna to Radha at Brindavana. The next poem is equally fine.

> " The prone shadows with their outstretched arms clung to the feet of the hurrying light. . . .
>
> . . . .
>
> Some one was busy with her work, and her bangles made music in the corner. I stood before this hut, I know not why." (Page 32).

The eighteenth, nineteenth, and twenty-third poems describe the sweet and graceful ways of Indian maidens with a simplicity that is charming.

> " The two sisters glance at each other when they come to this spot, and they smile.
>
> There is a laughter in their swift-stepping feet, which makes confusion in somebody's mind who stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water." (Page 41).

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"You are hidden as a star behind the hills, and I am a passer-by on the road. But why did you stop for a moment and glance at my face through your veil while you walked by the riverside path with the full pitcher upon your hip?" (Pages 42 & 43).

"Why do you stir the water with your hands and fitfully glance at the road for some one in mere idle sport?

"Fill your pitcher and come home.'' (Page 47).

The twentieth and twenty-first poems describe yet another aspect of love. The following quotations speak for themselves.

"Day after day he comes and goes away. Go, and give him a flower from my hair, my friend.

If he asks who was it that sent it, I entreat you, do not tell him my name—for he only comes and goes away."

(Page 44).

"Why did he choose to come to my door, the wandering youth, when the day dawned?

As I come in and out I pass by him every time, and my eyes are caught by his face. . . . .

He weaves his songs with fresh tunes everytime.

I turn from my work and my eyes fill with the mist. Why did he choose to come to my door?"

(Page 45).

I shall quote one other sweet poem describing how

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bashfulness is full of wild regret after the lover goes away.

" He put a flower in my hair. I said, ' It is useless !' ; but he stood unmoved.
He took the garland from my neck and went away. I weep and ask my heart, 'Why does he not come back ?' "

(Page 67).

I shall now take up the poems dealing with love in its manifold relation of life, as they are remarkable for their insight into the human heart and knowledge of its deepest impulses of pain and rapture. The poet shows how the young heart has a sudden blossoming of sweetness in it in the springtime of love and how it is first of all in love with love before it sees heaven realised in one human face.

" I run as a musk-deer in the shadow of the forest mad with his own perfume. . . . .
From my heart comes out and dances the image of my own desire. The gleaming vision flits on.
I try to clasp it firmly, it eludes me and leads me astray.
I seek what I cannot get, I get what I do not seek."

(Page 35).

" You are the evening cloud floating in the sky of my dreams.
I paint you and fashion you ever with my love longings. . . . .

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Your feet are red with the glow of my heart's desire, Gleaner of my sunset ! . . . . . .

I have caught you and wrapt you, my love, in the net of my music.

You are my own, my own, Dweller in my deathless dreams !" (Pages 58 & 59).

In the last poem above cited we have a divine commingling of suggestions of love of lover, love of the beloved, and love of God. The poet shows how when love comes to reign in the heart, there is the birth of an inner spring

" That quickens the pulse of the morning to wonder
And hastens the seed of all beauty to birth,
That captures the heavens and conquers to blossom
The roots of delight in the heart of the earth ?"

(Mrs. Sarojini Naidu's 'The Bird of Time.)'

The twenty-second poem describes this in verses full of wonderful affluence of beauty.

" When she passed by me with quick-steps, the end of her skirt touched me.

From the unknown island of a heart came a sudden warm break of spring.

A flutter of a flitting touch brushed me and vanished in a moment, like a torn flower petal blown in the breeze.

It fell upon my heart like a sigh of her body and whisper of her heart." (Page 46).

Tagore makes us realise further that the heart and its realm are endless in range and variety.

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"But it is a heart, my beloved. Where are its shores and its bottom? You know not the limit of this Kingdom, still you are its queen. . . . But it is love, my beloved. Its pleasure and pain are boundless, and endless its want and wealth. It is as near to you as your life, but you can never wholly know it."

(Pages 55 & 56).

Tagore then shows us the deepest and truest elements in love and makes us realise why it is that love draws our souls irresistibly and leads us into its paradise. Love overwhelms and enraptures us because it has in it the mystery of the infinite and because it awakens sweet suggestions of ante-natal union. The thirty-second poem is full of faultless loveliness and I quote it in full.

"Tell me if this be all true, my lover, tell me if this be true.

When these eyes flash their lightning, the dark clouds in your breast make stormy answer. Is it true that my lips are sweet like the opening bud of the first conscious love? Do the memories of the vanished months of May linger in my limbs?

Does the earth, like a harp, shiver into songs with the touch of my feet?

Is it then true that the dewdrops fall from the eyes of night when I am seen, and the morning light is glad when it wraps my body round?

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Is it true, is it true, that your love travelled alone through ages and worlds in search of me?

That when you found me at last, your age-long desire found utter peace in my gentle speech and my eyes and lips and flowing hair?

Is it then true that the mystery of the Infinite is written on this little forehead of mine?

Tell me, my lover, if all this be true."

(Pages 61 & 62).

"In the dusky path of a dream I went to seek the love who was mine in a former life. . . . . .

She set her lamp down by the portal and stood before me. . . . . . .

Tears shone in her eyes. She held up her right hand to me. I took it and stood silent.

Our lamp flickered in the evening breeze and died." (Pages 103 & 104).

We see expressed here the same profound sentiment that is expressed by D. G. Rossetti in *The House of Life*.

> "O born with me somewhere that men forget
> And though in years of sight and sound unmet
> Known for my soul's birth-partner well enough."

Tagore shows another true and divine element in love—the fact that it is really and in essence an attraction of the spirit.

"I hold her hands and press her to my breast. I try to fill my arms with her loveliness, to plunder

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her sweet smile with kisses, to drink her dark glances with my eyes.
Ah, but, where is it? Who can strain the blue from the sky?
I try to grasp the beauty; it eludes me leaving only the body in my hands.
Baffled and weary I come back.
How can the body touch the flower which only the spirit may touch?"

(Page 86).

Tagore shows further that the charm of woman's beauty is in part due to the idealising tendency of man's heart.

"O woman, you are not merely the handiwork of God, but also of men; these are ever endowing you with beauty from their hearts. . . . . . .
The desire of men's hearts has shed its glory over your youth.
You are one half woman and one half dream."

(Page 100).

Beauty by itself is mute till Love gives it the gracious gift of speech.

"Amidst the rush and roar of life, O Beauty, carved in stone, you stand mute and still, alone and aloof." (Page 101).

Beauty is most truly herself when love and service light up her eyes and loosen her tongue and give grace and divine helpfulness to her hands.

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"The perfection of your arms would add glory to kingly splendour with their touch.
But you use them to sweep away the dust, and to make clean your humble home, therefore, I am filled with awe."

(Page 137).

When love comes into life, the limits of life seem to get a push and life becomes widened and is filled with more light. This is well-brought out in the long poem on page 142. The woman who 'worked and dreamed daily to the tune of the bubbling stream' is made captive by love and goes away from the village with the lord of her soul. The villagers ask her when she comes back how she felt in her new world. She says :

"'Here is the same sky' she said, only free from the fencing hills,—this is the same stream grown into a river,—the same earth widened into a plain !"

(Page 144).

Life without love is dreary, weary, and wasted.

"I am the guest of no one at the end of my day.
The long night is before me, and I am tired".

(Page 108).

Love when it comes brooks no rival sovereign in the heart and dominates the soul.

"I leave behind my dreams, and I hasten to your call."

(Page 110).

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In the above poem there is also a suggestion of the call of Higher and Divine Love, which adds to the beauty and mystery of the poem. The precious offering of love is such that even the person offering it knows not its exceeding preciousness and rare loveliness. The simile of the blind girl brings out this truth beautifully in the following poem.

> "One morning in the flower garden a blind girl came to offer me a flower chain in the cover of a lotus leaf.
>
> I put it round my neck, and tears came to my eyes.
>
> I kissed her and said, 'you are blind even as the flowers are, you yourself know not how beautiful is your gift.!"

(Page 99).

The poet has not merely expressed the higher and diviner moods of love, but also its lower, lighter, and baser moods. One mood that is expressed with a heartbreak in the soul and a sob choking utterance is the recognition that death puts an end to the dreams of love.

> "For we have made truce with death for once, and only for a few fragrant hours we two have been made immortal."

(Page 79).

Therefore how should we order this all-too-brief life of ours, where death routs the fond dreams of love?

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"Let your life lightly dance on the edges of Time like dew on the tip of a leaf."

(Page 81).

Not only does death strangle the joys of love but even love is often faithless and fleeting.

"You left me and went on your way. I thought I should mourn for you and set your solitary image in my heart wrought in a golden song. . .

. . . .

But a fresh face peeps across my door and raises its eyes to my eyes. I cannot but wipe away my tears and change the tune of my song.

For time is short." (Pages 82-83).

Sometimes love of the lower type goes often with lack of insight and makes true love dumb with the endured agony of suppressed tenderness.

"I long to speak the deepest words I have to say to you ; but I dare not, for fear you should laugh. That is why I laugh at myself, and shatter my secret in jest. I make light of my pain, afraid you should do so." (Page 73).

The poet shows that a love that is too hungry for bliss defeats its own object.

"Why did the flower fade? I pressed it to my heart with anxious love, that is why the flower faded. Why did the stream dry up? I put a dam across it to have it for my use, that is why the stream dried up.

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Why did the harp-string break? I tried to force a note that was beyond its power, that is why the harp-string is broken."

(Page 89).

The next poem describes love scorned and put to shame.

"Why do you put me to shame with a look?

I have not come as a beggar. . . . .

Not a rose did I gather from your garden, not a fruit did I pluck."

(Page 90).

Another poem describes how the love that fawns at the feet of beauty drunk with the wine of bodily bliss is but a low form of love, and how the higher form of love is the homage of the liberated reason and the worship of a self-respecting and discerning manhood that realises in a true woman's love the very crown of life.

"Free me from the bonds of your sweetness, my love! No more of this wine of kisses. This mist of heavy incense stifles my heart.

Open the doors, make room for the morning light.

I am lost in you, wrapped in the folds of your caresses.

Free me from your spells, and give me back the manhood to offer you my freed heart."

(Page 85).

I have discussed above very briefly the love poems, pure and simple, in this volume. The poet does not

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content himself merely with the sweet love of youth and maid but shows how love broadens and deepens through its touch with life as a whole, by its conflict with death, and by its becoming fit after such baptism of life and death to rise to the very Throne of Grace and worship the Lotus Feet of God.

The seventy-seventh poem shows love lighting up every home and shedding its radiance on the sweet toils and charities of domestic life.

> "She goes back home with the full pitcher poised on her head, the shining brass pot in her left hand, holding the child with her right—she the tiny servant of her mother, grave with the weight of the household cares." (Page 133).

This sweet bond of love does not stop with human beings but extends to the whole realm of life and makes us realise the blissful unity of life.

> "She took up her brother in one arm, and the lamb in the other, and dividing her caresses between them bound in one bond of affection the offspring of beast and man."
>
> (Page 134).

> "It was in May. The sultry noon seemed endlessly long. The dry earth gaped with thirst in the heat. When I heard from the riverside a voice calling, 'come, my darling!'
>
> I shut my book and opened the window to look out.

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I saw a big buffalo with mud-stained hide standing near the river with placid, patient eyes ; and a youth, knee-deep in water, calling it to its bath.

I smiled amused, and felt a touch of sweetness in my heart.'' (Page 135).

" I often wonder where lie hidden the boundaries of recognition between man and the beast whose heart knows no spoken language. . . . . . .

Yet suddenly in some wordless music the dim memory wakes up and the beast gazes into the man's face with a tender trust, and the man looks down into its eyes with amused affection.

It seems that the two friends meet masked, and vaguely know each other through the disguise."

(Page 136).

I will refer here to a few further aspects described by the poet. The forty-second poem glorifies a life of freedom as opposed to the life of conventions in which we are living.

"I have wasted my days and nights in the company of steady wise neighbours.

Much knowing has turned my hair grey, and much watching has made my sight dim. . . . . .

I let go my pride of learning and judgment of right and wrong. I'll shatter memory's vessel, scattering the last drop of tears. . . . . . .

I'll take the holy vow to be worthless, to be drunken and go to the dogs." (Pages 75-77).

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The poet feels keenly the joy of life and invites us to share in the rapture.

"Over the green and yellow rice-fields sweep the shadows of the autumn clouds followed by the swift-chasing sun.
The bees forget to sip their honey; drunken with light they foolishly hover and hum.
The ducks in the islands of the river clamour in joy for mere nothing.
Let none go back home, brothers, this morning, let none go to work.
Let us take the blue sky by storm and plunder space as we run.
Laughter floats in the air like foam on the flood.
Brothers, let us squander our morning in futile songs."

(Page 145).

He shows how the true joy of life lies in love and in living life to the very top of its fulness, and not in barren asceticism.

"No, my friends, I shall never leave hearth and home, and retire into the forest solitude, if rings no merry laughter in its echoing shade and if the end of no saffron mantle flutters in the wind; if its silence is not deepened by soft whispers.
I shall never be an ascetic."

(Page 78).

"God commanded, 'stop, fool, leave not thy

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home,' but still he heard not. God sighed and complained, 'Why does my servant wander to seek me, forsaking me ?"

(Pages 130-131).

The poems dealing with life and love in relation to death are full of the profoundest wisdom conveyed in perfect words. I do not know if there is anything in literature to match the perfect beauty of the sixty-first poem.

" Peace, my heart, let the time for the parting be sweet.
'Let it not be a death but completeness.'
'Let love melt into memory and pain into songs.'
Let the flight through the sky end in the folding of the wings over the nest.
Let the last touch of your hands be gentle like the flower of the night.
Stand still, O Beautiful End, for a moment, and say your last words in silence.
I bow to you and hold up my lamp to light you on your way." (Page 102).

The following also show to us what should be our attitude towards death:—

" None lives for ever, brother, and nothing lasts for long. Keep that in mind and rejoice. . . . .
There must come a full pause to weave perfection into music. Life droops towards its sunset to be drowned in the golden shadows. . . . . . .

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Beauty is sweet to us, because she dances to the
same fleeting tune with our lives.
Knowledge is precious to us, because we shall
never have time to complete it.
All is done and finished in the eternal Heaven.
But earth's flowers of illusion are kept eternally
fresh by death.
Brother, keep that in mind and rejoice."

(Pages 116-8).

" Raise my veil, and look at my face proudly, O
Death, my Death !"

(Page 139).

Death makes us realise the sweetness of love in its fulness.

" The push of death has swung her into life.
We are face to face and heart to heart, my bride
and I."

(Page 141).

We now come to the loftiest poems in the volume—those wherein after love in its sweet radiance is born in the heart and spreads its glory over the whole of life and becomes pure and chastened after having looked into the fathomless eyes of Death, soars on the wings of truth and joy into the highest heaven of divine love. In one poem the words are so skilfully chosen that it is difficult to say whether it refers to human or divine love.

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"Lest I should confuse you with the crowd, you stand aside.
I know, I know your art,
You never walk the path you would."

(Page 66).

The human soul realises that it does not attain the true end of existence but feels stifled if it tries to surround itself with beautiful objects in a spirit of selfish egoism and seeks to live in a palace of art and worship love in an elaborately-designed shrine quite out of touch with the life of man and nature.

"With days of hard travail I raised a temple. It had no doors or windows, its walls were thickly built with massive stones.

. . . . .

It was always night inside, and lit by lamps of perfumed oil. . . . .

Sleepless, I carved on the walls fantastic figures in mazy bewildering lines—winged horses, flowers with human faces, women with limbs like serpents.

No passage was left anywhere through which could enter the song of birds, the murmur of leaves, or hum of the busy village. . . . . .

I knew not how time passed till the thunderstone struck the temple, and a pain stung me through the heart.

The lamp looked pale and ashamed; the carvings

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on the walls like chained dreams, stared meaningless in the light as they would fain hide themselves.

I looked at the image on the altar. I saw it smiling and alive with the living touch of God. The night I had imprisoned had spread its wings and vanished." (Pages 125-126).

It seems to me that in conception and expression this poem is even finer than the beautiful poem of Tennyson on *The Palace of Art*. There also the soul said :

"Trust me, in bliss I shall abide
In this great mansion, that is built for me,
So royal—rich and wide."

But soon she felt as

"A still salt pool, lock'd in with bars of sand,
Left on the shore ; that hears all night
The plunging seas draw backward from the land
Their moon-led waters white,
Throwing her royal robes away ;
'Make me a cottage in the vale,' she said,
Where I may mourn and pray.'"

The soul realises further that the innermost soul of ove cannot be seized by amorous arms and made captive to the body.

"Whom do I try to clasp in my arms? Dreams can never be made captive.

My eager hands press emptiness to my heart and it bruises my breast."

(Page 88).

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Having had a glimpse of the supernal beauty of Love that is the soul of the universe, the soul has an irresistible inner impulse to seek it and attain it.

"Traveller, must you go?
The night is still and the darkness swoons upon the forest.
The lamps are bright in our balcony, the flowers all fresh, and the youthful eyes still awake. . .
What quenchless fire glows in your eyes?
What restless fever runs in your blood?
What call from the dark urges you? . . . . .
O traveller, what sleepless spirit has touched you from the heart of the midnight?"

(Pages 105-6).

The flower of the world's delight can no longer satisfy it as it has had a glimpse of a fairer, more fragrant, and diviner flower, and as it has realised that the flower of earthly life fades and leaves but the thorn behind.

"I plucked your flower, O world.
I pressed it to my heart and the thorn pricked.
When the day waned and it darkened, I found that the flower had faded, but the pain remained."

(Page 98).

Though the quest is difficult, hope that is the sure presage of attainment springs in the soul.

"The lone night lies along your path, the dawn sleeps behind the shadowy hills.

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The stars hold their breath counting the hours, the feeble moon swims the deep night.

. . . . .

There is no home, no bed of rest.

There is only your own pair of wings, and the pathless sky.

Bird, O my bird, listen to me, do not close your wings." (Page 115).

"I hunt for the golden stag.

. . . . .

You come and buy in the market and go back to your homes laden with goods, but the spell of the homeless winds has touched me. I know not when and where.

I have no care in my heart; all my belongings I have left far behind me."

(Page 119).

The simile of the madman in the sixty-sixth poem that describes the search for the touchstone is opposite and beautiful.

"May be he now had no hope remaining, yet he would not rest, for the search had become his life,—

Just as the ocean for ever lifts its arms to the sky for the unattainable—just as the stars go in circles, yet seeking a goal that can never be reached."

(Pages 111-112).

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In such divine quest failure may often overtake the soul that is slowly fitting itself with the aid of the two great teachers—life and love—for the attainment of the goal of life. Failure is nothing ; it means that the goal is a little nearer than it was and that our faculties have been more trained than before and will hence serve us better during the next attempt. The simile of the paper-boat which the poet floated in a ditch when he was young and which was sunk by showers of rain, shows how in our onward progress petty failures should not hold us back anymore than the sinking of the paper-boat.

(Pages 120-121).

I now come to the divinest portion of the poem where the purified and perfected soul comes to the river of death and crossing it, reaches its true home—the arms of the Eternal Lover—and is pressed to His breast and is full of peace and love and joy that pass understanding. The seventy-first poem is full of the deepest symbolism and deserves careful and loving study. The soul comes to the river of death.

"The hushed water waits for the wind,
I hurry to cross the river before the night overtakes me.
O ferryman! you want your fee. Yes, brother, I have still something left. My fate has not cheated me of everything."

(Pages 122-123)

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After crossing the river, the soul hastens home with empty hands. What further burden of earthly possessions—fame, riches, power—should encumber it, when it hastens to attain the lotus feet of God where adore with folded palms the powers that rule the universe and bestow the lower objects of desire on the human souls that are full of attachment to the objects of the senses and that have not yet had a glimpse of the beauty of the countenance of God and of the heaven of His love? Yet it does not reach the Divine Presence quite empty, because "much remains still," if not in the hands yet still in the heart. Love and service and peace and joy —the higher qualities of the soul which unlike the material possessions are never lessened by increase in the objects of bounty but grow by giving—remain as pure gold in the heart and have further the power of the golden touch and make whatever comes into contact with them shining and precious gold.

> "At midnight, I reach home. My hands are empty.
> You are waiting with anxious eyes at my door, sleepless and silent.
> Like a timorous bird you fly to my breast with eager love.
> Ay, ay, my God, much remains still. My fate has not cheated me of everything."

(Page 124).

I shall now leave the soul face to face with God in the

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pure and passionate words of the poet which I am afraid of desecrating by any words of mine.

" Love, my heart longs day and night for the meeting with you—for the meeting that is like all-devouring death.

Sweep me away like a storm ; take everything I have ; break open my sleep and plunder my dreams. Rob me of my world.

In that devastation, in the utter nakedness of spirit, let us become one in beauty.

Alas for my vain desire ! Where is this hope for union except in thee, my God ? "

(Page 87).

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CHAPTER IV.

THE CRESCENT MOON.

This work even more than other works of Tagore's reveals some great qualities of his genius—his childlike purity and simplicity and his deep insight into that mysterious shrine of holiness and joy which is sometimes desecrated by trespassing passions and griefs and sin and worldliness—the human heart. The poem—or rather the series of poems—idealise childhood from various points of view. The poems show wherein the true charm and spiritual power of childhood consist, what a whole heaven and a whole earth of Loveliness lie neglected and unnoticed about us—the heaven of the child's heart made bright and beautiful by the sun and the moon of purity and of love and by the stars of golden poetic fancies, and the earth of the child's fair frame which has the radiance and glory of the spring and in which the sweetness and fragrance of all fair and fragrant flowers reside—a heaven and an earth sweeter far than the equally unnoticed sapphire sky with its daily pageant of heavenly presences and the green-mantled earth with its revolving seasons bringing unto it variegated beauty, lit by laughing flowers, the sweet home of life and love and joy. There is no one so tortured by physical pain but finds relief from his agonies at the sight of the fair fresh limbs and the laughing eyes of a

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lovely child there is no one so overwhelmed by sorrow but does not soar above his grief and rise into a paradise of peace and joy at the sight of the buoyancy and gaiety of a child ; there is no one so enslaved by passion and sin as not to feel a sudden liberation of the spirit and a sweet access of purity and heavenliness into his nature at the sight of the perfect simplicity and goodness of a child. It was this great truth that Christ brought out in an inimitable way as original as it is sweet when he said : "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ; suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not ; for of such is the Kingdom of God." Children keep the heaven of their heart undefiled because they do not know the torment and tyranny of passion and sin. It is through them that we are able to keep in our hearts such elements of gentleness and love and peace as sweeten and transfigure our existence.

Testimony to this fact has been borne by science, by literature and art, and by religion. Science tells us how the long and helpless infancy of the human offspring led to lifelong marital unions between men and women, sweetened our lives with love, dowered us with the loftiest elements of civilisation, and raised us from the level of the animal creation to the very seat of the Gods. Literature and art have never wearied of showing how the child keeps the diviner elements alive

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in our souls. The paintings of the Madonna and her Child in the west, the beautiful story of Krishna's boyhood in Gokula, the description of Parvathi's girlhood and Sri Subramanya's boyhood as found in Kalidasa's Kumarasambhava, the delineation of Bharatha in Kalidasa's Sakuntala, the description of the little child in Silas Marner, and innumerable other instances will occur to all. The inspired invocation to the child in Wordsworth's Ode on Intimations of Immortality is full of beauty and truth :

> "Thou whose exterior semblance doth belie
> Thy Soul's immensity ;
> Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
> Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
> That, deaf and silent, readst the eternal deep,
> Haunted for ever by the eternal mind—
> Mighty prophet ! seer blest !
> On whom those truths do rest
> Which we are toiling all over lives to find,
> In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave."

In our religion the realisation of the child's place in our spiritual economy is vivid and full. A religion that worships God as child in Vinayaka, Subramanya, and Balakrishna cannot be charged with any lack of appreciation of the beauty of the child-soul.

Tagore's *The Cresent Moon* marks a real epoch, just as Blake's publication of "The Songs of Innocence" did in his time. The note of love and idealism is as prominent in it as the note of intuitive insight into the child-soul, and we are grateful to the poet for a vivid and

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joyful appreciation of all that the child-soul means for us who go through life weighed down by work and sin, and are allowed to have very few peeps into the shrine of love and peace and rapture. A perusal of the book is in fact a revelation of the sources of divine joy lying so to say about our very feet, and soothes our world-weariness and sustains and uplifts us, and transfigures our souls with a new spiritual illumination which the poet brings to us in this wonderful poem which, in spite of the fact that it is only a prose rendering from the poet's Bengali poem, appeals in an intimate way to our hearts not only by the beauty of the English prose but by the poet's passionate sincerity of utterance which speaks the language of the heart straight to our souls, whatever be the medium chosen for conveying his precious sentiments and thoughts. I shall study the poem intimately so as to get into the heaven of the poet's soul and bear his message to the millions who go through life full of grief and pain unaware of the loveliness and gladness lying unnoticed about them.

The poet first brings home to us what a universal source of happiness God has given us in our children, how in every child God makes himself incarnate to us and shows us what are the really godlike qualities, and in what manner the children keep our hearts from becoming worldly and miserable. The very first poem shows how life is gladdened by children and how this precious gift of joy is given by God to every human

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being. The poet says: "I stopped for a moment in my lonely way under the starlight, and saw spread before me the darkened earth surrounding with her arms countless homes furnished with cradles and beds, mother's hearts and evening lamps, and young lives glad with a gladness that knows nothing of its value to the world."

(Pages 1-2).

In the last poem the poet shows how the love of the child is dearer and more powerful than kingly power or gold or even the smile of the beloved. In many places in the poem the poet enforces the same lesson with all the resources of art at his command.

We shall now try to ascertain how well the poet has studied the child's mind and heart and soul and how he is able to reveal to us the physical and mental graces of children and their high moral and spiritual qualities. He first shows how there is true greatness and heavenliness behind the simplicity of the child-life. The poet says in the fourth poem:

"Baby knows all manner of wise words, though few on earth can understand their meaning.

It is not for nothing that he never wants to speak.

The one thing he wants is to learn mother's words from mother's lips. That is why he looks so innocent.

Baby had a heap of gold and pearls, yet he came like a beggar on to this earth.

It is not for nothing he came in such a disguise.

This dear little naked mendicant pretends to be

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utterly helpless, so that he may beg for mother's wealth of love.

Baby was so free from every tie in the land of the tiny crescent moon.

It was not for nothing he gave up his freedom.

He knows that there is room for endless joy in mother's little corner of a heart, and it is sweeter far than liberty to be pressed in her dear arms.

Baby never knew how to cry. He dwelt in the land of perfect bliss.

It is not for nothing he has chosen to shed tears.

Though with the smile of his dear face he draws mother's yearning heart to him, yet his little cries over tiny troubles weave the double bond of pity and love."

(Pages 7-8).

There are many beautiful passages in this volume in which the mystery of the child's coming is enshrined in words of haunting beauty and melody. In one poem the mother says to the child :

> "You were hidden in my heart as its desire, my darling.
>
> You were in the dolls of my childhood's games ; and when with clay I made the image of my God every morning, I made and unmade you then.
>
> You were enshrined with our household deity, in his worship I worshipped you.
>
> When in girlhood my heart was opening its petals,

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you hovered as a fragrance about it.
Your tender softness bloomed in my youthful limbs like a glow in the sky before sunrise.
Heaven's first darling, twin-born with the morning light, you have floated down the stream of the world's life, and at last you have stranded on my heart.
As I gaze on your face, mystery overwhelms me; you who belong to all have become mine.
For fear of losing you I hold you tight to my breast. What magic has ensnared the world's treasure in these slender arms of mine?"

(Pages 15-16).

When studying thus Tagore's study of the child in itself, we must make prominent mention of his aliveness to the beauty of the child's body—fresh, fair, and fragrant like that of a flower. The golden loveliness of its skin so soft to the touch and so enrapturing to the sight; the heart-stealing, innocent, and radiant smile on the face of the child; the pure, trustful, and loving light in its bright black eyes; the sweet crescent of its forehead; the dimpled sweetness of its cheek and chin; and the slender, supple, and lissome grace of its limbs awaken in our hearts a feeling of deep thankfulness to God for bringing to us through the gift of children revelations of His beauty and rebirths of inner spring. The poem called "The Source" brings out this sentiment in a beautiful manner.

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"The sleep that flits on baby's eyes—does anybody know from where it comes? Yes, there is a rumour that it has its dwelling where, in the fairy village among shadows of the forest dimly lit with glow-worms, there hang two shy buds of enchantment. From there it comes to kiss baby's eyes.

The smile that flickers on baby's lips when he sleeps—does anybody know where it was born? Yes, there is a rumour that a young pale beam of a *crescent moon* touched the edge of a vanishing autumn cloud, and there the smile was first born in the dream of a dew-washed morning—the smile that flickers on baby's lips when he sleeps.

The sweet, soft freshness that blooms on baby's limbs—does anybody know where it was hidden so long? Yes, when the mother was a young girl it lay pervading her heart in tender and silent mystery of love—the sweet, soft freshness that has bloomed on baby's limbs."

(Pages 5-6).

In thus realising and expressing the beauty of a child, the poet recognises how even dirt in a child does not take away its appeal and charm—so full of true beauty and fascination is the fair fresh frame of a child. At page 20 the mother tells the child: "You have stained your fingers and face with ink while writing—is that why call you dirty? O, lie! Would they dare to call the full moon dirty, because it has smudged its face with ink? . . . . You tore your clothes

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while playing—is that why call you untidy? O, lie! What would they call an autumn morning that smiles through its ragged clouds?" (Pages 20-21). The very same idea that even what is unlovely becomes beautiful and enhances beauty in the case of perfectly lovely forms is conveyed in the immortal stanza of Kalidasa:

सरसिजमनुविद्धं शैवले नाऽपिरम्यं
मलिनमपि हिमांशोर्लक्ष्मलक्ष्मीं तनोति ।
इयमधिकमनोज्ञा वल्कलेनापितन्वी
किमिवहि मधुराणां मण्डनं नाकृतीनां ॥

(A lovely blossomed lotus flower, though surrounded by moss, is still beautiful and fair; the dark-spot in the white orb of the full moon increases its attractiveness. This fair maiden is all the fairer in her dark garments. What does not become an ornament on the person of sweet and perfect beauty?)

No poet has brought more vividly before our heart the irresistible appeal of the winsome ways of a child as Tagore has done. The description of Krishna's childhood and of the sweet ways by which the Divine Child made every one around him glad and willing slaves of love that we read in stately and melodious verses in the *Bhagawatha* is not more beautiful than the exquisite and intimate touches by which Tagore brings the child's sweet and heavenly winsomeness before us. The child's disregard of limitations of time and space and its

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perfect unconsciousness of the various artificial and often annoying limitations and restrictions which we regard as making up civilised life seem to lead us into a world altogether new where the sense of possession and selfish suspicion of others vanishes, and we feel like children glad of the beauty and sunshine of life and glad of all partaking of the same along with us. All true joy results from self-poise and release from petty limitations and restrictions, and wherefrom and how can we win such self-poise and glad release if not from the word of God and the equally sweet words of children, for of such is the Kingdom of God? Tagore well calls the sweet ways of children as "the unheeded pageant." The poem at page 9 is full of beauty and brings out this aspect very vividly.

"Ah, who was it coloured that little frock, my child, and covered your sweet limbs with that little red tunic?

You have come out in the morning to play in the courtyard, tottering and tumbling as you run.

But who was it coloured that little frock, my child?
What is it makes you laugh, my little life-bud?
Mother smiles at you standing on the threshold.
She claps her hands and her bracelets jingle, and you dance with your bamboo stick in your hand like a tiny little shepherd.

But what is it makes you laugh, my little life-bud?

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O beggar, what do you beg for, clinging to your mother's neck with both your hands ?
O greedy heart, shall I pluck the world like a fruit from the sky to place it on your little rosy palm ?
O beggar, what are you begging for ? The wind carries away in glee the tinkling of your anklet bells.
The sun smiles and watches your toilet.
The sky watches over you when you sleep in your mother's arms, and the morning comes tiptoe to your bed and kisses your eyes.
The wind carries away in glee the tinkling of your anklet bells." (Pages 9-10).

I shall now take up Tagore's loving analysis and interpretation of the child's personality, because a great poet's great glory is that he takes the common things and makes us see their diviner aspects and expresses the same in simple words that somehow take colour and radiance and become full of a heavenly significance when irradiated by the light of his soul.

Tagore adverts again and again to the child's absolute freedom from cares and its sportiveness and love of play. He says:

"They build their houses with sand, and they play with empty shells. With withered leaves they weave their boats, and smilingly float them on the vast deep. Children have their play on the seashore of worlds.

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They know not how to swim, they know not how to cast nets. Pearl fishers dive for pearls, merchants sail in their ships, while children gather pebbles and scatter them. They seek not for hidden treasures, they know not how to cast nets.

. . . . .

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet. Tempest roams in the pathless sky, ships are wrecked in the trackless water, death is abroad and children play on the seashore of endless worlds in the great meeting of children."

(Pages 3-4).

Besides this general description Tagore brings home to our hearts intimately the games that Indian boys love and the appeal of such games to our souls. He says:

"I launch my paper boats and look up into the sky and see the little clouds setting their white bulging sails.

I know not what play mate of mine in the sky sends them down the air to race with my boats!"

(Page 38).

Tagore then brings vividly before us the child's exquisite delight in beautiful objects that appeal to our senses. First and foremost is its love of flowers which is as deep and sweet as our maturer passion for the shining wealth of light in the morning, the mysterious beauty of forests in the night, and the majestic rivers that bear the gift of life to all. He says:

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"Ah! these jasmines, these white jasmines! I seem to remember the first day when I filled my hands with these jasmines.
I have loved the sunlight, the sky and the green earth;
I have heard the liquid murmur of the river through the darkness of midnight.
Autumn sunsets have come to me at the bend of a road in the lonely waste, like a bride raising her veil to accept her lover.
Yet my memory is still sweet with the first white jasmines that I held in my hand when I was a child." (Page 70).

Tagore's interpretation of the child-mind is equally beautiful. He deeply desires to enter into the child's mind. He says:

"I wish I could travel by the road that crosses baby's mind, and out beyond all bounds;
Where messengers run errands for no cause between the kingdoms of kings of no history;
Where Reason makes kites of her laws and flies them, and Truth sets fact free from its fetters."

He describes admirably the child's love of song, its love of stories, its supreme gift of imagination, and its desire to play the man. Wordsworth has described this aspect of the child's personality in a beautiful stanza.

" Behold the Child among his new born blesses,
A six year's Darling of a pigmy size!

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See, where' mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes!
See at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly learned art;
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral,
And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song:
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love or strife;
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with joy and pride
The little actor cons another part;
Filling from time to time his 'humorous stage'
With all the persons, down to palised Age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage;
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation."

The following description by Tagore of a boy's song is full of beauty:

> "Suddenly a boy's shrill voice rose into the sky. He traversed the dark unseen, leaving the track of his song across the hush of the evening."

His poem 'The Land of the Exile' and other poems show the child's love of stories. The child's wonderful imagination is described again and again in these poems. It is difficult to choose illustrations when there are so many of them. I give a few below.

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"I shall be the cloud and you the moon. I shall cover you with both my hands, aud our house-top will be the blue sky."

. . . . .

I will be the waves and you will be a strange shore.

I shall roll on and on, and break upon your lap with laughter.

And no one in the world will know where we both are." (Pages 27-8).

"Supposing I became a *champa* flower, just for fun, and grew on a branch high up that tree, and shook in the wind with laughter and danced upon the newly budded leaves, would you know me, mother ?

You would call, 'Baby, where are you ?' and I should laugh to myself and keep quite quiet.

I should shyly open my petals and watch you at your work." (Page 29).

"The princess lies sleeping on the far away shore of the seven impassable seas.

There is none in the world who can find her but myself.

She has bracelets on her arms and pearl drops in her ears ; her hair sweeps down upon the floor.

She will wake when I touch her with my magic wand, and jewels will fall from her lips when she smiles.

But let me whisper in your ear, mother ; she is

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there in the corner of our terrace where the pot of the *tulsi* plant stands". (Pages 31-32).

"I can imagine how, on just such a cloudy day, the young son of the king is riding alone on a grey horse through the desert, in search of the princess who lies imprisoned in the giants' palace across that unknown water." (Page 34).

The child's love of adventure and high achievement is equally beautifully described in his poems. He desires to "cross the seven seas and the thirteen rivers of fairy land" (page 40), to 'ride abroad redressing human wrongs', and to bring relief to those in distress (pages 62-4). He desires to play the man and take part in the work of the world. (Page 42, page 50).

Tagore's insight unto the child's heart is equally admirable. He shows how full of love for the mother the child is, and how to it she is the dearest thing in the world.

"Mother, do you want heaps and heaps of gold? There, by the banks of golden streams, fields are full of golden harvest.

And in the shade of the forest path the golden *champa* flowers drop on the ground.

I will gather them all for you in many hundred baskets." (Page 47).

"What nice stories, mother, you can tell us! Why can't father write like that, I wonder?"

(Page 58).

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> " I shall become a delicate draught of air and caress you ; and I shall be ripples in the water when you bathe, and kiss you and kiss you again." (Page 66).

The child's purity, trustfulness, innocence, and love for all—in fact the whole paradise of the child's moral nature is beautifully revealed to us in these poems.

And what shall we say of his description of the child soul ? " Heaven lies about us in our infancy." Tagore says:

> " The fairy mistress of dreams is coming towards you, flying through the twilight sky.
>
> The world-mother keeps her seat by you in your mother's heart.
>
> He who plays his music to the stars is standing at your window with his flute.
>
> And the fairy mistress of dreams is coming towards you, flying through the twilight sky".
>
> (Pages 10-11).

I shall now consider Tagore's loving study of the exquisite relationship between adult life and child-life and of all that the child means for us and does for us. First and foremost he makes us feel how we are " but children of a larger growth".

> " I am busy with my accounts, adding up figures by the hour. . . . .
>
> I seek out costly playthings, and gather lumps of gold and silver.

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With whatever you find you create your glad games; I spend both my time and my strength over things I never can obtain.

In my frail canoe I struggle to cross the sea of desire, and forget that I too am playing a game".

(Pages 23-24).

The mother's deep love for the child—that most wonderful and divine thing to which there is no parallel this side of heaven—is well described by the poet.

" I do not love him because he is good, but because he is my little child. . . . .

I alone have the right to blame and punish, for he only may chastise who loves". (Page 22).

The supreme value of the child to us for our inner growth is well described by the poet. It is through the child that we are kept from becoming of the earth, earthy. The divine elements of life—pity, self-sacrifice, love, eagerness to serve, joy,—are kept alive, in us by the child's regenerative influence. Tagore says :

" Bless this little heart, this white soul that has won the kiss of heaven for our earth.

He loves the light of the sun, he loves the sight of his mother's face.

He has not learned to despise the dust, and to hanker after gold.

Clasp him to your heart and bless him.

. . . . .

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He will follow you, laughing and talking, and not
a doubt in his heart.
Keep his trust, lead him straight and bless him.

. . . . .

Forget him not in your hurry, let him come to your
heart and bless him." (Page 74-75).

The poem called " The Child-Angel" shows this even more clearly.

" They clamour and fight, they doubt and despair,
they know no end to her wranglings.
Let your life come amongst them like a flame of
light, my child, unflinching and pure, and delight
them into silence.
They are cruel in their greed and their envy, their
words are like hidden knives thirsting for blood.
Go and stand amidst their scowling hearts, my
child, and let your gentle eyes fall upon them
like the forgiving peace of the evening over the
strife of the day.
Let them see your face, my child, and thus know
the meaning of all things ; let them love you and
thus love each other.
Come and take your seat in the bosom of the limit-
less, my child. At sunrise open and raise your
heart like a blossoming flower, and at sunset
bend your head and in silence complete the
worship of the day." (Pages 79-80).

Indeed, life itself becomes full of meaning for us and

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we realise its significance through the contemplation of the child-nature. For are we not all children of God who takes delight in our delight? As Christ says;

> " Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask for bread, will he give him a stone?
>
> Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?
>
> If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him "

Tagore's poem *When and Why* says:

> " When I bring you coloured toys, my child, I understand why there is such a play of colours on clouds, on water, and why flowers are painted in tints,—when I give coloured toys to you, my child.
>
> When I sing to make you dance, I truly know why there is music in leaves, and why waves send their chorus of voices to the heart of the listening earth—when I sing to make you dance.
>
> When I bring sweet things to your greedy hands, I know why there is honey in the cup of the flower, and why fruits are secretly filled with sweet juice—when I bring sweet things to your greedy hands.
>
> When I kiss your face to make you smile, my darling, I surely understand what pleasure streams from the sky in morning light, and what

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delight the summer breeze brings to my body—
when I kiss you to make you smile."

(Pages 18-19).

What can we give to the child in return for all this ? What can be a fit recompense for love ? What but love itself ? We must embosom their lives in love so that our memory will ever remain in their hearts like a blessing, and their love will make the heaven where we shall go a heavenlier place as it made a heaven of the earth where we were. Two poems of Tagore's teach us this in words of faultless beauty and I shall quote them. One is called *The Gift.*

"I want to give you something, my child, for we are drifting in the stream of the world.
Our lives will be carried apart, and our love forgotten.
But I am not so foolish as to hope that I could buy your heart with my gifts.
Young is your life, your path long, and you drink the love we bring at one draught and turn and run away from us.
You have your play and your playmates. What harm is there if you have no time or thought for us?
We, indeed, have leisure enough in old age to count the days that are past, to cherish in our hearts what our hands have lost for ever.
The river runs swift with a song breaking through

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all barriers. But the mountain stays and remembers, and follows her with his love."

(Pages 76-77).

The next poem is entitled "My Song."

"This song of mine will wind its music around you, my child, like the fond arms of love.

This song of mine will touch your forehead like a kiss of blessing.

When you are alone it will sit by your side and whisper in your ear, when you are in the crowd it will fence you about with aloofness.

My song will be like a pair of wings to your dreams, it will transport your heart to the verse of the unknown.

It will be like the faithful star overhead when dark night is over your road.

My song will sit in the pupils of your eyes and will carry your sight into the heart of things. When my voice is silent in death, my song will speak in your living heart." (Page 78).

Thus this poem is full of wonderful beauty and heavenly sweetness of suggestion. In the divine magical mirror of the poet's heart the crescent moon is reflected, but in the reflection has become by some mysterious process a full-orbed moon of art, stainless, radiant, full of calm and steadfast rapture, carrying our thoughts far away from earthiness and strife into the paradise of love and joy and peace.

———

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CHAPTER V.

CHITRA.

In this play we have not the same affluence of mystical thought and emotion as in other works by Tagore. But we have in it a realisation of the diviner elements of life and love, a heavenly message to the human soul as to what is the meaning of love in the truest sense of the term.

The play is not only a thing of beauty in itself but reveals to us what artistic possibilities lie in our Puranas if only we have in us the selective and creative genius of great poets like Kalidasa and Tagore and learn the message of the Puranic stories aright and seek to steep them in the light of our imagination and reveal them to the world for its uplift and delight. The great peculiarity in the case of stories of India is that they are still a living force in the hearts of men ; that the persons dealt within them are still our ideals who dominate and direct our lives and our thoughts ; and that a new interpretation of such stories in a vivid manner that will bring out the great dreams of our race loyally will be a great national work for which unborn generations will be grateful to us, because it will help to unify and intensify our national life and make our land full of dynamic love and achievement.

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The message of the play is the idea so beautifully expressed in Carew's poem on *True Beauty* :

" He that loves a rosy cheek
  Or a coral lip admires
Or from star-like love doth seek
  Fuel to maintain his fires ;
As old Time maketh these decay,
So his flames must waste away.
But a smooth and steadfast mind,
  Gentle thoughts and calm desires,
Hearts with equal love combined
  Kindle never dying fires :—
Where these are not, I despise
Lovely cheeks or lips or eyes !".

The poet teaches us that the love that is founded on beauty of body alone is built on insecure foundations. Beauty in human face and form is like the glow of sunset on evening clouds, " like hues and harmonies of evening"—glorious, fleeting, mysterious. To the man with true vision the beauty, grace, and charm that enraptures the lover in his beloved's face is but a dim reflection, an imperfect revelation, of the wondrous vision —the light of the soul behind the veil of the mortal flesh. The beauty of the soul is immortal as the soul is immortal. Love built on the beauty of the soul is built on a rock and endures for ever.

To understand aright the play before us we must remember one great characteristic of Indian love-poetry. Though Indian poets have sung in rapturous terms

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about love at first sight, the sudden blossoming of true and loyal and measureless affection and devotion for another in the garden of the heart, the transfiguration of the soul and the universe in the morning radiance of new-born love, they dwell even more lovingly and rapturously on the deep and heavenly joys of love after marriage with the sweet charities of home life, on the calm mid-day splendour of love's sun which, if it has less pomp and variety of colour, has a loftier height, a more universal outlook, a more fruitful power. The European literary artists dwell more upon the former aspect of love than on the latter aspect. Our literary artists dwell on both but dwell with more love and joy upon the latter than on the former aspect. Ernst Hornwitz in his *Short History of Indian Literature* says : "Conjugal fidelity takes a prominent place amongst Hindu virtues, and gems many a page of Sanscrit Literature." Wilson says : "The loose gallantry of modern comedy is unknown to the Hindus, and they are equally strangers to the professed adoration of chivalric poetry ; but their passion is neither tame nor undignified. It is sufficiently impassioned not to degrade the object of the passion ; while at the same time the place that woman holds in society is too rationally defined for her to assume an influence foreign to her nature, and the estimate in which human life is held is too humble for a writer to elevate any mortal to the honours of divinity."

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That this is true about our world of art is indisputable. The dawn of love before marriage is exquisitely described in verses full of true delicacy of feeling and wonderful insight in the stories of Sakuntala, Damayanthi, Malathi, and others. Even in such stories the poets take us to the riper and higher lives of these women, and show their measureless devotion, love, and self-effacement after their marriage. The literary artists of India however produce their subtlest and sweetest literary effect in bringing out the heaven of the sentiment of love after marriage. In fact many of the greatest love-stories of India take up the lives of the heroines of India after their marriage. The instance of the Yaksha's wife in Kalidasa's *MeghaSandesa* is not a unique instance, though his great poetic genius has enabled him to lift his theme to the loftiest heights of achievement. The stories of Sita, Savitri, Droupathi, and other heroines, human and divine, show this truth very well. Sir Monier Williams says in his book on *Indian Wisdom* : " Indeed, in depicting scenes of domestic affection, and expressing those universal feelings and emotions which belong to human nature, Sanskrit epic poetry is unrivalled even by the Greek epos." Again he says: " It must be admitted, however, that in exhibiting pictures of domestic life and manners the Sanskrit epics are even more true and real than the Greek and Roman . . . . Indeed, Hindu wives are generally perfect patterns of conjugal fidelity : nor

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can it be doubted that in these delightful portraits of the Pativrata (devoted wife) we have true representations of the purity and simplicity of Hindu domestic manners in early times." I shall quote here only one exquisite passage from the great poet Bhavabhuthi's *Uttara Rama Charita*, where Rama describes in one perfect stanza the calm rapture, the utter selflesness, the faithfulness unto death and beyond death, and the pure and passionate perfection of the wedded love of himself and Sita.

> अद्वैतं सुख दुःखयो रनुगुणंसर्वा स्वस्थासुय
> द्विश्रामो यत्र जरसा यस्मिन्नहार्यो रसः ।
> कालेनावरणात्ययात्परिणते यत्स्नेहसारे स्थितं
> भद्रं प्रेम सुमानुषस्य कथमप्येकं हितत्प्राप्यते ॥

(It is hard to win—and happy and unrivalled is he who wins—that supreme and blessed and true love of a good and loving woman which knows no change in grief and in joy, which is faithful in all moods and conditions, whereon the heart reposes amidst the trials of life, the sweetness of which never decays with the decay of bodily vigour, and which becomes as time goes on the very quintessence of fond affection owing to the removal of all barriers to its perfect and blissful self-expression).

Tagore is a true child of his great poetic ancestors. He has recognised and expressed the true glory of love in his works. His insight into Indian ideals and

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conceptions of love is very well shown in the essays that he has written interpreting the genius of Kalidasa. He says: "The poet has shown here, as in. *Kumarasambhava*, that the Beauty that goes hand in hand with Moral law is eternal, that the calm, controlled, and beneficent form of Love is its best form, that Beauty is truly charming under restraint and decays quickly when it gets wild and unfettered. This ancient poet of India refuses to recognise love as its own highest glory; he proclaims that goodness is the final goal of love. He teaches us that the love of man and woman is not beautiful, not lasting, not fruitful,—so long as it is self-centred, so long as it does not beget goodness, so long as it does not diffuse itself in society over son and daughter, guests and neighbours. The two peculiar principles of India are the beneficent tie of home-life on the one hand, and the liberty of the soul abstracted from the world on the other. In the world India is variously connected with many races and many creeds; she cannot reject any of them. But on the altar of devotion (*tapasya*) India sits alone. Kalidasa has shown, both in *Sakuntala* and *Kumarasambhava*, that there is a harmony between these two principles, an easy transition from the one to the other. In his hermitage human boys play with lion cubs, and the hermit—spirit is reconciled with the spirit of the householder. On the foundation of the hermitage of recluses Kalidas has built the home of the householder. He has rescued the relation of the

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sexes from the sway of lust and enthroned it on the holy and pure seat of asceticism. In the sacred books of the Hindus the ordered relation of the sexes has been defined by strict injunctions and laws. Kalidas has demonstrated that relation by means of the elements of of Beauty. The Beauty that he adores is lit up by grace, modesty, and goodness; in its intensity it is true to one for ever ; in its range it embraces the whole universe. It is fulfilled by renunciation, ratified by sorrow, and rendered eternal by religion. In the midst of this Beauty, the impetueous unruly love of man and woman has restrained itself and attained to a profound peace like a wild torrent merged in the ocean of Goodness. Therefore is such love higher and more wonderful than wild and unrestrained Passion." (See Ganesh and Co's The Indian Nation-Builders, Volume III pages 337-338).

The story of the drama is very slight, and the beauty of the play lies rather in its presentation and its message than in the story. Chitra is the only daughter of Chitravahana who has however no son. She is brought up to be the ruler of a kingdom, and is trained to become a beneficent ruler and military chieftain. She has all through her young life cherished a fond passion for Arjuna, the chivalrous prince and the ideal man, whom she has however never seen. Arjuna, in the course of his pilgrimage, meets her wearing her usual masculine attire, and on learning who he is the woman in her wakes up. She describes this meeting thus:

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"One day in search of game I roved alone to the forest on the bank of the Parna river. Tying my horse to a tree trunk I entered a dense thicket on the track of a deer. I found a narrow sinuous path meandering through the dusk of the entangled boughs, the foliage vibrated with the chirping of crickets, when of a sudden I came upon a man lying on a bed of dried leaves across my path. I asked him haughtily to move aside, but he heeded not. Then with the sharp end of my bow I pricked him in contempt. Instantly he leapt up with straight, tall limbs, like a sudden tongue of fire from a heap of ashes. An amused smile flickered round the corners of his mouth, perhaps at the sight of my boyish countenance. Then for the first time in my life I felt myself a woman, and knew that a man was before me." (Pages 4-5).

She then dons feminine garments and meets him. But she is of an unattractive plainness of face and has no seductiveness of fórm and figure, and has never cultivated those feminine graces that have the most potent charm and power in their apparent weakness. He puts her off with the statement that he has taken a vow of celibacy for twelve years.

She then meets Madana (the God of love) who "binds in bonds of pain and bliss the lives of men and women," and Vasanta (the God of Spring) who is "Eternal Youth." She tells Madana :

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"I know no feminine wiles for winning hearts. My hands are strong to bend the bow, but I have never learnt Cupid's archery, the play of eyes...... Oh, the vow of a man! Surely thou knowest, thou god of love that unnumbered saints and sages have surrendered the merits of their life-long penance at the feet of a woman. . . . .
O Love, God Love, thou hast laid low in the dust the vain pride of my manlike strength; and all my man's training lies crushed under thy feet. Now teach me thy lessons; give me the power of the weak, and the weapon of the unarmed hand. . . . . . . For a single day make me superbly beautiful, even as beautiful as was the sudden blooming of love in my heart. Give me but one brief day of perfect beauty, and I will answer for the days that follow."

(Pages 3, 7, 8, 9, 10).

Madana then says: "Lady, I grant thy prayer." Vasanta adds: "Not for the short span of a day, but for one whole year the charm of spring blossoms shall nestle round thy limbs."

Arjuna then meets this superb beauty seated by a lake looking at the image of her newborn heavenly loveliness glassed in nature's mirror. Love blossoms in his heart at once. The following marvellous description deserves our loving perusal.

"Was I dreaming or was what I saw by the lake

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truly there? Sitting on the mossy turf, I mused over by-gone years in the sloping shadows of the evening, when slowly there came out from the folding darkness of foliage an apparition of beauty in the perfect form of a woman, and stood on a white slab of stone at the water's brink. It seemed that the heart of the earth must heave in joy under her bare white feet—methought the vague veilings of her body should melt in ecstacy into air as the golden mist of dawn melts from off the snowy peak of the eastern hill. She bowed herself above the shining mirror of the lake and saw the reflection of her face. She started up in awe and stood still; then smiled, and with a careless sweep of her left arm unloosed her hair and let it trail on the earth at her feet. She bared her bosom and looked at her arms, so flawlessly modelled, and instinct with an exquisite caress. Bending her head she saw the sweet blossoming of her youth and the tender bloom and blush of her skin. She beamed with a glad surprise. So, if the white lotus bud on opening her eyes in the morning were to arch her neck and see her shadow in the water, would she wonder at herself the live-long day. But a moment after the smile passed from her face, and a shade of sadness crept into her eyes. She bound up her tresses, drew her veil over her

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arms, and sighing slowly, walked away like a beauteous evening fading into the night. To me the supreme fulfilment of a desire seemed to have been revealed in a flash and then to have vanished." (Pages 12-13).

Chitra surrenders herself to him. There is a delicate touch of irony in the following dialogue.

" *Chitra*—Then it is not true that Arjuna has taken a vow of chastity for twelve long years?

Arjuna—But you have dissolved my vow even as the moon dissolves the night's vow of obscurity."

Though full of deep love for him she grieves at his homage to her borrowed beauty of body and tells him by hints—and that however could not convey the truth—about her beauty being a temporary gift.

" *Chitra*—Surely this cannot be love, this is not man's homage to woman! alas, that this frail disguise, the body, should make one blind to the light of the deathless spirit!

. . . . .

Arjuna—Ah, I feel how vain is fame, the pride of prowess! Everything seems to me a dream. You alone are perfect; you are the wealth of the world, the end of all poverty, the goal of all efforts, the one woman! Others there are who can be but slowly known. While to see you for a moment is to see perfect completeness once and for ever.

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Chitra—Alas, it is not I, not I, Arjuna! It is the deceit of a God. Go, go, my hero, go. Woo not falsehood. Offer not your great heart to an illusion. Go." (Pages 18-19).

But she surrenders to the passionate call of his love out of her exceeding love for him. After her first night of supreme happiness, she goes back to Madana and Vasanta and passionately beseeches them to take back their gift—the beauty that the Gods had thrown about her like a golden raiment woven of the radiance of sunrise and sunset and moonlight and night and flowers and everything else wherein the spirit of beauty dwells. Vasanta says to her:

"A limitless life of glory can bloom and spend itself in a morning."

(Page 22).

Madana says:

"Like an endless meaning in the narrow span of a song." (Page 23).

She replies:

"But when I woke in the morning from my dream I found that my body had become my own rival. It is my hateful task to deck her every day, to send her to my beloved, and see her caressed by him. O God, take back the boon!"

(Page 27).

Then Vasanta tells her:

"Listen to my advice. When with the advent of

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> autumn the flowering season is over, then comes the triumph of fruitage. A time will come of itself when the heat-cloyed bloom of the body will droop and Arjuna will gladly accept the abiding fruitful truth in thee! O child, go back to thy mad festival."

She then goes back and the year of perfect happiness is drawing to a close. Arjuna tells her that he wishes to take her home as his bride. There is a genuine cry of the heart in her reply.

> "Home! But this love is not for a home. . . . That which was meant for idle days should never outlive them. Joy turns into pain when the door by which it should depart is shut against it. Take it and keep it as long as it lasts. Let not the satiety of your evening claim more than the desire of your morning could earn. . . The day is done. Put this garland on. I am tired. Take me in your arms, my love. Let all vain bickerings of discontent die away at the sweet meeting of our lips."

(Pages 30-1).

What is Arjuna's reply?

> "Hush! Listen, my beloved, the sound of prayer-bells from the distant village temple steals upon the evening air across the silent trees!"

(Page 31).

These words suggest in a wonderful way more than

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express words can do that love is a benediction coming from God and not a mere empty day's dalliance with the fleeting fairness of the body's flower.

Arjuna yearns more and more to get nearer to her soul. He yearns also to go back to his kingly work of love and helpfulness to his subjects though his love of Chitra in the forest is still the dominant passion of his heart. He says to her :

> " I woke in the morning and found that my dreams had distilled a gem. I have no casket to enclose it, no king's crown whereon to fix it, no chain from which to hang it, and yet have not the heart to throw it away. My Kshatriya's right arm idly occupied in holding it forgets its duties. . . . . The restless spirit is on me. I long to go hunting."

(Pages 35-36).

Chitra replies :

> " First run down the quarry you are now following. Are you quite certain that the enchanted deer you pursue must needs be caught ? No, not yet. Like a dream the wild creature eludes you when it seems most nearly yours. Look how the wind is chased by the mad rain that discharges a thousand arrows after it. Yet it goes free and unconquered. Our sport is like that, my love ! You give chase to the fleet-footed spirit of beauty, aiming at her every dart you have in

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your hands. Yet this magic deer runs ever free and untouched". (Page 37).

Arjuna says in reply to this :

"Come closer to me, unattainable one ! Surrender yourself to the bonds of name and home and parentage. Let my heart feel you on all sides and live with you in the peaceful security of love. . . . . Mistress mine, do not hope to pacify love with airy nothings. Give me something to clasp, something that can last longer than pleasure, that can endure even through suffering." (Page 39).

It is thus clear that he has thus risen into a higher plane of love and has become enamoured of the beauty of her soul. But she could not then reveal herself as she is, as the gift of the Gods is still on her in all its splendour, and the God-given garment of glory enwraps her in a sheath of physical radiance.

Then comes the last night. Vasanta tells her :

"The loveliness of your body will return to-morrow to the inexhaustible stores of the spring. The ruddy tint of thy lips, freed from the memory of Arjuna's kisses, will bud anew as a pair of fresh *asoka* leaves, and the soft, white glow of thy skin will be born again in a hundred fragrant jasmine flowers." (Page 41).

Chitra then asks :

"O Gods, grant me this last prayer ! To-night, in

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its last hour let my beauty flash its brightest, like the final flicker of a dying flame."

(Pages 41-2).

Madana replies :

"Thou shalt have thy wish."

(Page 42).

Meantime the villagers come to Arjuna for protection as their beloved sovereign and protector had gone on a pilgrimage. He hears from them about Chitra's purity, tenderness, nobility, and dignity of soul, ability and wish to serve, and heavenly sweetness of heart. He becomes deeply enamoured of her and asks his beloved to tell him about Chitra. Arjuna says to his beloved :

"They say that in valour she is a man and a woman in tenderness." (Page 45).

Chitra replies :

"That, indeed, is her greatest misfortune. When a woman is merely a woman ; when she winds herself round and round men's hearts with her smiles and sobs and services and caressing endearments, then she is happy. Of what use to her are learning and great achievements?"

(Page 45).

Arjuna yearns to go to protect the villagers and says:

"With new glory I will ennoble this idle arm, and make of it pillow more worthy of your head."

(Page 47).

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Arjuna confesses that his heart had gone out to Chitra. Chitra says again :

> "Her very qualities are as prison walls, shutting her woman's heart in a farewell. She is obscured, she is unfulfilled. Her womanly love must content itself dressed in rags ; beauty is denied her. She is like the spirit of a cheerless morning, sitting upon the stony mountain peak, all her light blotted out by dark clouds. Do not ask me of her life. It will never sound sweet to man's ear." (Page 48).

But Arjuna's heart has been moved by the stories that he has heard of Chitra's purity, goodness, and charm of soul. He longs to meet her and says :

> "I seem to see her, in my mind's eye, riding on a white horse, proudly holding the reins in her left hand, and like the Goddess of Victory dispensing glad hope around her. Like a watchful lioness she protects the litter at her dugs with a fierce love. Woman's arms, though adorned with naught but unfettered strength, are beautiful !"
>
> (Pages 49-50).

Chitra then hesitatingly asks him :

> "Arjuna, tell me true, if now at once, by some magic, I could shake myself free from this voluptuous softness, this timid bloom of beauty shrinking from the rude and healthy touch of the

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world, and fling it away from my body like borrowed clothes, would you be able to bear it? . . . . . . Would it please your heroic soul if the playmate of the night aspired to be the helpmate of the day, if the left arm learnt to share the burden of the proud right arm?"

(Pages 50–1).

Arjuna replies:

"I never seem to know you aright. You seem to me like a goddess hidden in a golden image. I cannot touch you, I cannot pay you my dues in return for your priceless gifts. Thus my love is incomplete. Sometimes in the enigmatic depth of your sad look, in your playful words mocking at their own meaning, I gain glimpses of a being trying to rend asunder the langorous grace of her body, to emerge in a chaste fire of pain through a vaporous veil of smiles. Illusion is the first appearance of Truth. She advances towards her lover in disguise. But a time comes when she throws off her ornaments and veils and stands clothed in naked dignity. *I grope for that ultimate you, that bare simplicity of truth.*

Why these tears, my love? Why cover your face with your hands? Have I pained you, my darling? Forget what I said. I will be content with the present. Let each separate moment of beauty come to me like a bird of mystery from its unseen

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> nest in the dark bearing a message of music Let me for ever sit with my hope on the brink of its realization, and thus end my days."
>
> (Pages 52–3)

Such is the conversion of Arjuna's heart, his rise from the early frail rapture of the senses—born of the blossomed face, the golden statuesque beauty of form and figure, the silken softness of the limbs, the fluting tones full of love's richest music, the fragrance of dark tresses crowned with flowers, and the sweetness that dwells in the ruby cup of the lips—to the steadfast heavenly joy of the soul to which the body is the revelation of the soul and which seeks the never-dying and ever-new raptures of the heart born of union through the elective affinity of two personalities consummating their individual lives by a supreme rebirth in the heaven of love. Chitra herself—her borrowed garment of beauty gone– comes cloaked to Arjuna and says:

> "I brought from the garden of heaven flowers of incomparable beauty with which to worship you, God of my heart. If the rites are over, if the flowers have faded, let me throw them out of the temple (*unveiling in her original male attire*). Now, look at your worshipper with gracious eyes."
>
> (Page 55).

She then tells him her story of her innate love and her borrowed radiance and offers her heart at his feet. She says:

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"I am not beautifully perfect as the flowers with which I worshipped. I have many flaws and blemishes : . . . .
The gift that I proudly bring to you is the heart of a woman. Here have all pains and joys been gathered, the hopes and fears and shames of a daughter of the dust; here love springs up struggling toward immortal life. Herein lies an imperfection which yet is noble and grand. If the flower-service is finished, my master, accept *this*, as your servant for the days to come! . . .
If you deign to keep me by your side in the path of danger and daring, if you allow me to share the great duties of your life, then you will know my true self. If your babe, whom I am nourishing in my womb, be born a son, I shall myself teach him to be a second Arjuna, and send him to you when the time comes, and then at last you will truly know me. To-day I can only offer Chitra, the daughter of a king."

Arjuna's reply is brief but perfect. The poet's wonderful art and his power of conveying "an endless world of meaning in the narrow span" of a sentence (to use his own words in the play) are seen in that wonderful reply of Arjuna:

"Beloved, my life is full."

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CHAPTER VI.

THE KING OF THE DARK CHAMBER.

The drama that I now proceed to study critically is one that commands our homage alike by its literary beauty and its spiritual message. The method that I shall adopt is the narration of the story in the poet's own words, only interposing a few words and ideas of my own to bring out the full significance of the situation and the dialogue. The translation of the drama by Mr. Kshitish Chandra Sen deserves every commendation for its beauty and charm of style, though it is far below Tagore's own translations in "Gitanjali" and "Gardener" in point of beauty and melody of style.

Who is the King of the Dark Chamber? He is God. For is He not felt and seen and realised and adored in the chamber of the heart—the *Daharakasa*? A few wayfarers go into the Kingdom of the King of the Dark Chamber from the ordinary earthly Kingdoms. The wonderful art of the poet is seen in the way in which he has contrasted the earthly Kingdoms with the Kingdom of God. The ways of the earth are crooked and perilous. But the Kings there, however, are very much given to pomp and vainglorious display though their wisdom and their power for good are very limited. They merely regulate and curb the beast in man to

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some extent by all sorts of crooked regulations but are unable to set free the angel in man. But the King of the Universe is not visible in his Kingdom. His country is, however, full of wondrous beauty ; the ways therein are open and broad and smooth, and there is absolute liberty given to all. The wayfarers are, however, bewildered by this new state of affairs. One of them named Janardan says :

> "As for roads in our country—well, they are as good as non-existent ; narrow and crooked lanes, a labyrinth of ruts and tracks. Our King does not believe in open thoroughfares ; he thinks that streets are just so many openings for his subjects to fly away from his kingdom. It is quite the contrary here ; nobody stands in your way, nobody objects to your going elsewhere if you like to ; and yet the people are far from deserting this Kingdom. With such streets our country would certainly have been depopulated in no time."

Another reproves him for his crooked views. A third says :

> "One can't help feeling that life becomes a burden in this country ; one misses the joys of privacy in these streets."

The poet's gift of subtle satire is shown in the reply given by a third wayfarer.

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"And it is Janardan who persuaded us to come to this precious country! We never had any second person like him in our family. You knew my father, of course; he was a great man, a pious man if ever there was one. He spent his whole life within a circle of a radius of 49 cubits drawn with a rigid adherence to the injunctions of the scriptures, and never for a single day did he cross this circle. After his death a serious difficulty arose—how cremate him within the limits of the 49 cubits and yet outside the house? At length the priests decided that though we could not go beyond the scriptural number, the only way out of the difficulty was to reverse the figure and make it 94 cubits; only thus could we cremate him outside the house without violating the sacred books. My word, that was strict observance! Ours is indeed no common country."

We cannot come across a more scathing indictment of the meaningless and disastrous addiction of many of our countrymen to the letter that killeth, and the poet points out how even in such mischievous adherence to the letter there is infidelity in regard to their vaunted homage to the scriptures. The attack upon adherence to the letter that killeth is, of course, not with reference to our community alone but with reference to all communities that swear by pet phrases and shibboleths—as for

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instance the theories of the overman and of master-morality that are now endangering the safety of nations and the peaceful evolution of humanity—and ruin themselves and the world irreparably by such addiction to evil ways.

As soon as this band of wayfarers comes into the new kingdom, whom do they meet first? The poet's admirable art must be noted here. The wayfarers see a grandfather with a band of boys. The grandfather represents the Guru—the teacher whose feet are gladly and firmly set on the path leading to God, who confers on all by his presence and by his teaching the joy that irradiates his heart, who is as happy as the day is long, and who in his heavenly wisdom puts to shame by the simplicity and truth of his ideas the elaborate sophistries of others. He comes leading a band of boys, for, in the words of Jesus Christ, "of such is the kingdom of heaven." Sri Shankaracharya says:

योगीयोगनियोजितचित्तो रमते बालोन्मत्तवदेव ॥

(The yogi whose mind is bent on seeking union with the Lord rejoices like a boy and like one who has lost his senses). The song that the grandmother and the boys sing is full of the rapture of spring. The play thus opens with the glory and joy of springtime.

> "The Southern gate is unbarred. Come, my spring, come!
> Thou wilt swing at the swing of my heart, come, my spring, come!

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Come in the lisping leaves, in the youthful surrender of flowers;
Come in the flute songs and the wistful sighs of the wood lands!
Let your unfastened robe wildly flap in the drunken wind!
Come, my spring, come!"

Then the wayfarers meet some citizens of the new kingdom. These, not having seen their King, say that he must be either non-existent or ugly, as otherwise he would not refuse to appear before his subjects during the great spring festival. The dialogue among them contains many beautiful natural touches—one of them Virupaksha by name has come to the conclusion that the king must be dreadfully ugly and he is dying to communicate the secret to all. The grandfather comes into this group and tells them:

" We are all Kings in the Kingdom of our King.
Were it not so, how could we hope in our hearts to meet him!
We do what we like, yet we do what he likes:
We are not bound with the chain of fear at the feet of a slave-owning King.
Were it not so, how could we hope in our heart to meet him!
Our King honours each one of us, thus honours his own very self.
No littleness can keep us shut in its walls of untruth for aye.
Were it not so, how could we hope in our heart to meet him!
We struggle and dig our own path, thus reach his path at the end.

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We can never get lost in the abyss of dark night.
Were it not so, how could we hope in our heart to meet him !

We may well pause here and try to understand the great spiritual truths contained in this song. We are all kings, *i.e.*, pure spirits. Else how could divine communion or union be possible ? The line " we do what we like, yet we do what he likes " gives us a more convincing solution of the problems of free will and predestination than is given by many volumes of crabbed and dull philosophy. We are under the reign of Mercy, and hence for each step that we take forward His Mercy takes ten steps towards us and renders our salvation possible. We cannot be in the prison of sorrow and fear for ever. We struggle towards light and in realising ourselves realise Him.

The following dialogue between one of the citizens and the grandfather is as full of truth as it is beautiful.

"*First citizen*—Just fancy! Any one libelling me can be punished, while nobody can stop the mouth of any rascal who chooses to slander the King.

Grand-father—The slander cannot touch the King. With a mere breath you can blow out the flame which a lamp inherits from the sun, but if all the world blow upon the sun itself its effulgence remains undimmed and unimpaired as before."

This simile enables us to realise vividly how the unquenchable radiance of God's mercy and love is ever

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illumining us whether we open our eyes to its beauty and saving power or not and whether we give it the homage of our hearts or revile it in our hardness of heart and blindness of vision.

Then re-enter the party of foreigners with whom the play opens. Janardan tries to convince them that the order and regularity and harmony existing in the Kingdom presupposes the existence of a King but the others would not believe him as he had not seen the King himself.

The following song that now occurs in this play is admirably conceived and expressed.

"My beloved is ever in my heart,
  That is why I see him everywhere,
He is in the pupils of my eyes
  That is why I see him everywhere.
I went far away to hear his own words,
  But, ah, it was vain!
When I came back I heard them
  In my own songs.
Who are you to seek him like a
      beggar from door to door!
Come to my heart and see his face in
      the tears of my eyes!"

This poem is full of high and sweet spiritual ideas. God is near to those who seek Him within themselves through the golden pathway of love and meditation. The *Lalita sahasranama* says of the Universal Mother:

अन्तर्मुखसमाराध्या बहिर्मुखसुदुर्लभा ॥

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(Who is capable of approach and worship by one who seeks Her by means of meditation and inward striving, and who is hard to reach by mere outside search and external forms of worship). If our heart is full of God we can then see the divine radiance everywhere. We need not go far to hear His voice. In the stillness of our meditation and in the rapturous outpourings of our love we hear his magical flute. We need not seek Him from place to place. Let us go to the true devotee who yearns for God's love and whose heart is pure. In the temple of the pure heart and in the tears that spring to the eyes when we realise our unworthiness to receive His love, we can see the radiance of His face.

Now comes the episode of the false King. He has the flag and the paraphernalia of the true King; but he is a miserable counterfeit, though he is very beautiful to see. The citizens are overjoyed when they learn from the heralds that the King is coming. One of them, Kumbha by name, tells the others that once he paid homage to a false King and was disappointed in his expectations. He says :

> "It is only the other day that a King came and paraded the streets, with as many titles in front of him as the drums that made the town hideous by their din . . . . . . What did I not do to serve and please him! I rained presents on him, I hung about him like a beggar—and in the end I found the strain on my resources too hard to

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bear. But what was the end of all that pomp and majesty? When people sought grants and presents from him, he could not somehow discover an auspicious day in the Calendar: though all days were red-letter days when *we* had to pay our taxes!"

But no one pays any heed to his words. One of them Madhav cries out as soon as he sees the false king:

"Look! There comes the king! Oh, a king indeed! What a figure, what a face! Whoever saw such beauty—lily-white, creamysoft! . . . . He looks as if he were moulded and carved for kingship, a figure too exquisite and delicate for the common light of day."

Such is the popular conception of kingship! Every one pays homage to the false king while bitterly reviling others for their knee-crooking and baseness of soul. Then Kumbha brings the grandfather in, who tries to disabuse his mind of the delusion of the populace. The grandfather says:

"Whenever has *our* king set out to dazzle the eyes of the people by pomp and pageantry? . . . If my king chose to make himself shown, your eyes would not have noticed him. He would not stand out like that amongst others—he is one of the people, he mingles with the common populace."

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Such is the mystery of the Divine Being. Tennyson has said in *The Higher Pantheism* :

" Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet." Out of His infinite compassion, He comes among the sons of men to lead them to the paradise of His love. Kumbha says :

" But did I not tell you I saw his banner ?

Grandfather :—What did you display on his banner ?

Kumbha :—It had a red *Kimshuk* flower painted on it—the bright and glittering scarlet dazzled my eyes.

Grandfather :—*My* king has a thunderbolt within a lotus painted on his flag."

Thus the pseudo-king has mere empty glitter and parade. Such is the nature of all false faiths. But the true God has a thunderbolt within a lotus painted on his flag. The thunderbolt stands for Law and the lotus for Love and Beauty. Hence He is Law and Love and Beauty. Tennyson says in the poem above referred to :

" God is law, say the wise ; O Soul, let us rejoice,
For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His voice."

The further dialogue between Kumbha and the Grandfather is equally full of spiritual truth.

Kumbha :—So none can recognise him in his incognito, it seems.

Grandfather :—Perhaps there are a few that can.

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Kumbha :—And those that can recognise him—does the king grant them whatever they ask for ?

Grandfather :—But they never ask for anything. No beggar will ever know the king."

How true and beautiful this is ! Those who get a glimpse of the beauty of God's countenance beg for no earthly blessings. They live in the heaven of His love and want nothing else. Now comes the Mad Friend whose song is full of beauty. He typifies the soul that is mad after God, and who in his divine madness is wiser than the sane worldly fools. Swami Ramakrishna Paramahamsa has said :

" This world is a huge Lunatic Asylum where all men are mad, some after money, some after women, some after name or fame, and a few after God. I prefer to be mad after God."

I shall quote here a portion of the Mad Friend's song :

" Do you smile, my friends ? Do you laugh, my brothers ? I roam in search of the golden stag ! Ah yes, the fleet-foot vision that ever eludes me ! . . . . . You all come to buy in the market place and go back to your houses laden with goods and provisions : but me the wild winds of unscalable heights have touched and kissed—Oh, I know not when or where ! I have parted with my all to get what never has become mine ! And you think my moanings and my tears are

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for the things I thus have lost! With a laugh and a song in my heart I have left all sorrow and grief far behind me: Oh, I roam and wander through woods and fields and nameless lands—never caring to turn my vagabond's back!"

The next scene introduces us to Queen Sudarshana and her maid of honour Surangama. The Queen typifies the Jiva (the individual soul) and Surangama seems to typify self-surrender and peace (Prapathi and Santhi). The king meets and loves and dowers with divine joy Queen Sudarshana but only in the Dark Chamber of the Palace. The first glimpse of God is in the Dark Chamber of the heart. Sudarshana yearns to see Him in the universe in open daylight and rebels when this wish is not granted.

Sudarshana :—But why should this room be kept dark?

Surangama :—Because otherwise you would know neither light nor darkness.

. . . . .

Sudarshana :—No, no—I cannot live without light—I am restless in this stifling dark. Surangama, if you can bring a light into this room, I shall give you this necklace of mine.

Surangama :—It is not in my power, O Queen. How can I bring light to a place which He would have kept always dark!"

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The soul wants to break the divine law that the first sight of God shall be only through faith and love that do not adopt an attitude of doubt or question or challenge or negation but adopt a humble attitude of reverent yearning. It wants the light of mental perception to be brought into this chamber of Faith and Love where in silence and stillness and darkness the first glimpse of the Divine is had in the heart. But this may not be, though when the sense of God-immanence is developed, God may be seen in light and in darkness, in the outside world and in the Chamber of the Heart. Surangama tells the process of the conversion of her soul from an attitude of rebellion to one of utter and reverent self-surrender.

> " A day came when all the rebel in me knew itself beaten, and then my whole nature bowed down in humble resignation on the dust of the earth. And then I saw. . . . . I saw that he was as matchless in beauty as in terror. Oh, I was saved, I was rescued."

The following dialogue has a whole heaven of spiritual suggestiveness in it.

" *Surangama* :—Do you not feel a faint breeze blowing ?

Sudarshana :—A breeze ? Where ?

Surangama :—Do you not smell a soft perfume ?

Sudarshana :—No, I don't.

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Surangama :—The large door has opened. . . . he is coming ; my king is coming in.

Sudarshana :—How can you perceive when he comes ?

Surangama :—I cannot say ; I seem to hear his footsteps in my own heart. Being his servant of this dark chamber, I have developed a sense—I can know and feel without seeing.

Sudarshana :—Would that I had this sense too, Surangama !

Surangama :—You will have it, O Queen. . . . . this sense will awaken in you one day. Your longing to have a sight of him makes you restless, and therefore all your mind is strained and warped in that direction. When you are past this state of feverish restlessness, everything will become quite easy."

The power to recognise God's Beauty and the heart to love it come out of humility and reverence and self-surrender. The King now comes to meet Sudarshana in the Dark Chamber. His song requesting her to open the door is full of the music of inner melodies.

" Open your door. I am waiting.
The ferry of the light from the dawn to the dark is done for the day,
The evening star is up.
Have you gathered your flowers, braided your hair,
And donned your white robe for the night ?

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The cattle have come to their folds and birds to their nests.

The cross paths that run to all quarters have merged into one in the dark.

Open your door. I am waiting."

Even the radiance of God cannot illumine the house of our heart until we open the door and let the light come in. Surangama asks Sudarshana to open the door.

"Then do you go, O Queen, and open the door for him : he will not enter otherwise.

Sudarshana:—I do not see anything distinctly in the dark—I do not know where the doors are. You know everything here—go and open the doors for me."

The soul in its attitude of rebellion and reliance on reason does not even know where the hindrance to light is. Surangama opens the door and goes out. The King comes in. Sudarshana insists on seeing Him in the open day-light. What marvels of thought and vision are compressed in the following dialogue ?—

"*Sudarshana* :—But tell me, can you see me in the dark ?

King :—Yes, I can.

Sudarshana :—What do you see ?

King :—I see that the darkness of the infinite heavens, whirled into life and being by the power of my love, has drawn the light of a myriad stars into itself, and incarnated in a form of flesh and

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blood. And in that form, what æons of thought and striving, untold yearnings of limitless skies, the countless gifts of unnumbered seasons!

Sudarshana:—Am I so wonderful,so beautiful? When I hear you speak so, my heart swells with gladness and pride. But how can I believe the wonderful things you tell me ? I cannot find them in myself !

King:—Your own mirror will not reflect them—it lessens you, limits you, makes you look small and insignificant. But could you see yourself mirrored in my own mind, how grand would you appear! In my own heart you are no longer the daily individual which you think you are. You are verily my second self.

Sudarshana:—Oh, do show me for an instant now to see with your eyes ! Is there nothing at all like darkness to you? I am afraid when I think of this. This darkness which is to me real and strong as death—is this simply nothing to you ?"

This soul of ours is perfect in its beauty, being the flower of the entire cosmic life ; and yet in the mirror of mind this beauty is not seen in full. God's perfect vision realises its beauty in full. The soul gathers exprience through the ages; and only after it realises its nature fully can its first glimpse of God in the heart become a steady realisation of Him everywhere. Sudarshana insists on being allowed to see the King in open daylight. The

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King says that he will appear in the full radiance of daylight, but that she will have to recognise him for herself. Sudarshana says:

> " I shall know you; I shall recognise you.
> I shall find you out among a million men.
> I cannot be mistaken."

The King then tells her and Surangama that he can be seen at the festival of the Spring,

> " Where the music will play at its sweetest, where there the air will be heavy with the dust of flowers —there in the pleasure grove of silver light and mellow gloom."

Surangama deprecates the Queen's curiosity and says: " Curiosity will have to come back baffled in tears !" The song with which the scene concludes expresses the same truth in beautiful and melodious and suggestive words :

> " Ah, they would fly away, the restless vagrant eyes, the wild birds of the forest!
> But the time of their surrender will come, their flights hither and thither will be ended when
> The music of enchantment will pursue them and pierce their hearts.
> Alas, the wild birds would fly to the wilderness!"

The scene now changes to where various kings of the earth—Kings of Kanchi, Avanti, Koshala, and other Kingdoms--have come to the Kingdom of the King. They seem to typify the mind and the senses. They speak with scorn of the access allowed to the common people

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to witness the festival and are angry at a separate place not having been set apart for them. They frankly say that they have come for the sake of Sudarshana. They are met at the very outset by the Grandfather and the boys who tell them that they are " the Jolly Band of Have-Nothings." They resent the approach of these Jolly Beggars. Then they meet the counterfeit king. The King of Kanchi who typifies the mind sees through the hoax, for what false faith on God can stand the daylight of reason ? But the other kings who typify the senses are more dense and are attracted by his outside show. The impure Mind, however, does not discard the false king but seeks to gain Sudarshana with his help. The King of Kanchi calls on the false king to do him homage which the latter obsequiously does after a little bluster. How much bitter and melancholy truth summing up a million movements since the world began is expressed in the following dialogue ! The King of Kanchi asks the false king :

" Have you got any following ?

The false "king" replies:

" I have. Every one who sees me in the streets flocks after me. When I had a meagre retinue at first every one regarded me with suspicion, but now with increasing crowd their doubts are waning and dissolving. The crowd is being hypnotised by its magnitude. I have not got to do anything now."

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In our country itself many movements have been born and live in which the increasing crowd has got hyponotised by its own magnitude, and people who joined them for the fun of the thing or for other purposes have become blind to their falseness and hollowness, and 'faith unfaithful keeps them falsely true.' The kings promise to help him to become king in fact, and he promises to bring Sudarshana to them.

The citizens of the kingdom now come in a state of anger and loudly abuse the king as this man lost his child, that man lost his fortune, and another man is striken with disease. Do we not all blame God for what is due to our own sin? The Grandfather says to them :

"I have lost all my five children one after another.

Third citizen :—What do you say now ?

Grandfather :—What then ? Shall I lose my king too because I have lost my children ? Don't take me for such a big fool as that."

The five children seem to typify the five senses who have ceased to be worldly and are hence said to be dead. The citizens do not heed his words and depart in a state of anger and revolt.

The scene now changes to the royal palace whence Sudarshana is looking out to find the king in open daylight. Sudarshana is not with her but Rohini is with her. How can Surangama (self-surrender and peace) be by her side in her state of pride and passionateness ? Rohini has naturally a deep aversion for Surangama.

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She seems to typify the soul's lower nature and its love of pleasure. In Sanskrit mythology Rohini is the beloved consort of Chandra (the moon) who is the God of passion and pleasure. Sudarshana sees the false king from her tower and falls in love with his beauty of person and sends Rohini with flowers to the false King. The song of the boys whom she calls in to sing to her is very sweet.

> "My sorrow is sweet to me in this spring night.
> My pain smites at the chords of my love and softly sings.
> Visions take forth from my yearning eyes and flit in the moonlight sky.
> The smells from the depths of the woodlands have lost their way in my dreams.
> Words come in whispers to my ears, I know not from where,
> And bells in my anklets tremble and jingle in time with my heart-thrills."

How vividly it calls to mind the equally beautiful song in Tennyson's *Princess* :

> "Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
> Tears from the depth of some divine despair
> Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes
> In looking on the happy autumn fields,
> And thinking of the days that are no more,"

and the equally melodious stanza in Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*.

> रम्याणि वीक्ष्य मधुरांश्च निशम्यशब्दान्
> पर्युत्सुकीभवति यत्सुखितोऽपिजन्तुः ।

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तच्चेतसा स्मरति नूनमबोधपूर्वं
भावस्थिराणि जननान्तरसौहृदानि ॥

(The reason why even a happy man is filled with a vague longing and melancholy when he sees lovely things and hears melodious sounds is that he remembers, without clearly realising, antenatal love and passion which remain fixed in the soul without rising to the surface of consciousness.)

When the false King sees the present of flowers—the flowers of thought and emotion—sent by the *Jiva*, he is unable to respond to the call of the love of the Queen. For which false faith can satisfy the hunger of the soul? The King of Kanchi, who is at the side of the false King, accepts the flowers for the "King" and gives a necklace of jewels as a present to Rohini, as he has a game of his own to pursue. Sudarshana's pride is now shattered to atoms by this, and yet she is unable to banish from her mind the delicate attractiveness of the false "King's" person. She even gets the necklace from Rohini and finds pleasure in putting it round her neck.

The scene now shifts to where the people throw red powder on each other as a sign of merriment during the spring festival. The translator has the following note: "In this play this red powder has been taken to be the symbol of the passion of love." The Kings, however, would have none of the red powder on their robes. The Grandfather tells the citizens about those Kings:

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"Well done, friends—always keep them at a distance. They are the exiles of the Earth—and we have got to keep them so."

Then follow two marvellous songs both worth quoting in full.

"All blacks and whites have lost the distinction
And have become red—red as the tinge of your feet.
Red is my bodice and red are my dreams,
My heart sways and trembles like a red lotus."

"With you is my game, love, my love!
My heart is mad, it will never own defeat,
Do you think you will escape stainless yourself reddening me with red powder?
Could I not colour your robe with the red pollens of the blossom of my heart?"

When shall the ancient hatreds of the earth—colour bars, race animosities, religious persecutions, and other machinations of the devil—be washed out of existence by this deluge of red—the red of love, of peace, of universal brotherhood?

Then the false "King" and the various earthly Kings enter the palace gardens. The King of Kanchi counsels the false "King" to set fire to the palace gardens and to take advantage of the bustle and confusion to accomplish his object. Meantime he himself has an idea of seizing the kingdom also in addition to having Sudarshana. The King of Kanchi and "the false King" leave the other Kings in the lurch, and these are in a state of consternation and suspicion—as they are not

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shrewd enough and do not know what to do and they realise further that the King of Kanchi is trying to deceive them and take everything for himself. The gardeners and the pet animals in the garden hurry away. A sudden conflagration envelops the garden. The King of Kanchi fired only a portion of the garden and finds the flames leaping up all round and destroying everything. Such is reason. It can never stop half-way, but must go the full length of the process of logical analysis, though it is surprised at the reasoning process taking it to conclusions for which it was unprepared. In such a baptism of fire, the false "King" loses the few shreds of dignity that he had and collapses in terror. The King of Kanchi pulls him out of the conflagration more dead than alive. Sudarshana runs up and asks the false "King" to save her from the fire. He cries out that he is a fraud and that he is not the King at all and runs out with the King of Kanchi. She is overpowered by shame and cries out:

> "No King! He is not the King? Then, O thou God of fire, burn me, reduce me to ashes! I shall throw myself into thy hands, O thou great purifier, burn to ashes my shame, my longing, my desire."

Then she re-enters her burning chambers seeking the bath of fire to wash off her sins.

There she meets the true "King" who assures her that fire will not reach that room. She says that she is burnt by the fire of shame. She confesses that she is

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wearing the false King's necklace. How beautiful and full of meaning is the King's reply.

> "That garland, too, is mine,—how else could he get it? He stole it from my room."

This shows how the elements of truth and beauty that exist in lower faiths are come from God. Sudarshana says that the surrounding flames showed the King to her for a minute; that he is "black as the threatening storm-cloud, black as the shoreless sea"; and that she cannot bear the sight of his form. He tells her:

> "Have I not told you before that one cannot bear my sight unless one is already prepared for me? That is why I wanted to reveal myself to you slowly and gradually, not all too sudden."

Such is the vision of God that we get in the light of the fire of reason! We see him black and awful—as he is the Law by which the whole universe is controlled and guided. Sudarshana says that she is under the spell and glamour of the false "King's" beauty and wants to leave him. The King says:

> "You have the utmost liberty to do as you like . . . . . you can go as free as the broken storm-cloud driven by the tempest."

She then rushes out. Then enters Surangama who sings a song that shows how God's love deals with our soul that frets and fumes like a froward child.

> " What will of thine is this that sends me afar!

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Again shall I come back at thy feet from all my wanderings.

It is thy love that feigns neglect—thy caressing hands are pushing me away—to draw me back to thy arms again! O my King, what is this game that thou art playing throughout thy Kingdom?"

Sudarshana comes back but finds that the King is gone. She asks Surangama:

"Tell me if he has punished the prisoners with death.

Surangama—Death? my King never punishes with death.

Sudarshana—What has he done to them, eh?

Surangama—He has set them at liberty. Kanchi has acknowledged his defeat and gone back to his kingdom."

This dialogue contains some of the loftiest lessons of the loftiest religion. No one can be alien to God's love, or banished from his grace, for ever. No one is utterly destroyed but each is allowed to work up his way to His love. Surangama then asks Sudarshana's leave to go with her. The Queen is surprised and touched by this as Rohini deserted her refusing to go with her.

They then go to the house of Sudarshana's father—the King of Kanya Kubja. But he would not treat her with affection, and says: "When woman swerves from the right path, then she appears fraught with the direst calamity." Sudarshana is depressed by none showing

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the least sympathy for her in her misfortune. Her mind is still running on the false "King" and his beauty. She thinks that he fired the palace to seize her and reverts fondly to his passion and boldness. But Surangama informs her that the daring act was that of the King of Kanchi and not that of the false "King" who is well-named *Suvarna*, *i.e.*, the man with a bright exterior. Sudarshana piqued at the true "King's" fancied neglect of her praises *Suvarna* and tries to argue herself into a passion for him.

The King of Kanchi now turns up to carry off Sudarshana by force. The other kings—of Avanti, Koshala, Kalinga and other places—also turn up with their armies. *Suvarna* pleads to be left out of the battle but the King of Kanchi would not allow this. The King of Kanya Kubja is beaten in battle and made prisoner, and the arrangement is that from among the kings he whom Sudarshana chooses is to wed her. The art of the poet is seen in its fulness in making the false King hold the umbrella of the King of Kanchi in the *Suvayamvara* hall. The King of Kanchi compels him to hold the umbrella as Sudarshana looked on the latter with favour and he thinks that she will admire him and love him when she finds that the man whom she admired was but the umbrella-bearer of a greater King. A false religion is used for temporal purposes by designing monarchs. Woe unto the world if there be such an unholy alliance of civil and ecclesiastical

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power ! Sudarshana feels humiliated when she sees in the hall *Suvarna* whose beauty had attracted her hold the umbrella of the King of Kanchi. Surangama comforts her by saying : "Mistakes are but the preludes to their own destruction." Sudarshana prepares to go into the hall with a dagger in her bosom to kill herself. The following soliloquy of Sudarshana is full of beauty and is further valuable as showing what the poet has understood by the Dark Chamber.

> "O King, my only King ! You have left me alone, and you have been but just in doing so. But will you not know the inmost truth within my soul ? (*Taking out a dagger from within her bosom*). This body of man has received a stain—I shall make a sacrifice of it to-day in the dust of the hall, before all these princes ! But shall I never be able to tell you that I know of no stain of faithlessness within the hidden chambers of my heart ? That Dark Chamber where you would come to meet me lies cold and empty within my bosom to-day—but, O my Lord ! none has opened its doors, none has entered it but you, O King ! Will you never come again to open those doors ? Then, let death come, for it is dark like yourself, and its features are beautiful as yours. It is you—it is yourself, O King."

The assembled princes await the arrival of Sudarshana. Some of them have a presentiment of coming

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trouble but the King of Kanchi ridicules such fears. He says:

> "I never take the unseen into account till it has become 'seen.'"

That is the power and the weakness of mind. The grandfather now turns up and announces that the King has come. Then most of the princes who had coveted Sudarshana quietly sneak away. The King of Kanchi, however, says:

> "I too am going—but not to do him homage. I go to fight him on the battle-ground.
>
> *Grandfather*:—You will meet my King in the field of battle; that is no mean place for your reception."

When the other Kings find him resolved to fight, they join him lest he should carry off the prize. All get beaten but the King does not come to claim Sudarshana.

Sudarshana waits for his coming but is unable to bend her heart in humility before him. She is deeply annoyed at his neglect. The Grandfather then turns up, and she then bows to him. It is the first step in the ladder of spiritual progress. He typifies the *Guru*, and she first bends low before him. She says:

> "I have heard that you are my King's friend, so accept my obeisance and give your blessings."

According to the Hindu religion, when the soul is sincere in its yearning to see God, the *Guru* will come

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at the right moment. But when Sudarshana sees that after the great battle the victorious King went away without seeking her, she again sets her mind against him. This episode shows well the alternations and fluctuations of faith and unfaith in a sincere soul. The Grandfather then tells her :

> "You are young still—you can afford to wait for him ; but to me, an old man, a moment's loss is a week. I must set out to seek him whether I succeed or not."

The Grandfather after thus setting out meets the King of Kanchi on the road leading to the palace of the true King. The following dialogue contains many great spiritual truths.

"*Grandfather* :—What Prince of Kanchi, you here !

Kanchi :—Your king has sent me on the road.

Grandfather :—That is a settled habit with him.

Kanchi :—And now, no one can get a glimpse of him.

Grandfather :—That too is one of his amusements.

Kanchi :—But how long more will he elude me like this ? When nothing could make me acknowledge him as my King, he came all of a sudden like a terrific tempest—God knows from where—and scattered my men and horses in one wild tumult ; but now, when I am seeking the ends of the earth to pay him my humble homage, he is nowhere to be seen.

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Grandfather :—But however big an Emperor he may be, he has to submit to him that yields."

The King ceaselessly inspires all to seek His love and sends them on the road leading to Him, though many wander off into other paths on the way and others stand still owing to faintness of heart. It is not easy to get a glimpse of the radiance of His face. Our attitude of negation and defiance makes Him show His terrific aspect but we cannot see His *Saumya* (or benign aspect) unless love become humble, reverential, full of love and adoration. But, however great He may be, he yields to love.

भक्त्या त्व नन्यया शक्य: अहमेवं विधोऽर्जुन ।
ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परंतप ॥

(In this way—by peerless and steadfast devotion alone—can one know me, realise me, and attain union with me). (Ch. XI—*Gita*).

The King of Kanchi has, however, not attained utter humility of soul and is hence unfit to see God. He travels by night to avoid being laughed at for his going a walking to pay homage to another. He says to the Grandfather :

"I still cannot get rid of the feeling of a secret dread of being laughed at by people when they see me meekly doing homage to your King, acknowledging my defeat."

The reasoning mind is not prepared to surrender

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everything but wants to preserve its dignity. Having been accustomed to command and govern, it finds it strange to love and obey. Far different is the attitude of the grandfather (*guru*) who typifies faith and who is prepared to lose everything for God. He says:

> "I am waiting with my all in the hope of losing everything.
> I am watching at the roadside for him who turns one out into the open road,
> Who hides himself and sees, who loves you unknown to you,
> I have given my heart in secret love to him,
> I am waiting with my all in the hope of losing everything."

On the same road travels Sudarshana also, humble and contrite, hearing the sweet and resistless call of the Infinite. She says to her inseparable companion Surangama:

"What a relief, Surangama, what freedom! It is my defeat that has brought me freedom. Oh what an iron pride was mine! Nothing could move it or soften it. My darkened mind could not in any way be brought to see the plain truth that it was not the king who was to come, it was I who ought to have gone to him."

The poet's spiritual insight is seen in his making her say that after the transfiguration of reason by love she heard again those beautiful magical melodies of God's *Vina* that she used to hear seated by the window of the

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Dark Chamber in her days of unwavering faith before the period of her intellectual revolt. Surangama says :

"But it is just to hear that same *Vina's* music that I am always by your side. It is for this call of music which I knew would one day come to dissolve all the barriers of love that I have all along been listening with an eager ear."

All the minor faculties of the soul find their ultimate fulness of perfection when the soul begins to hear and enjoy God's melodies, the hearing of which is the amaranthine crown of the life of the soul. Sudarshana now meets the King of Kanchi who is going on the same road.

Sudarshana :—King of Kanchi !

Surangama :—Don't be afraid, my Queen !

Sudarshana :—Afraid ! Why should I be afraid ? The days of fear are gone for ever from me !

So long as the soul relied on its strength and was in a state of opposition to God, it was beset by fears and dangers. Now that it had—in the beautiful words of the *Gitanjali*—"the strength to surrender its strength to His will with love," it felt fear no more. The dialogue between the King of Kanchi and Sudarshana is full of the loftiest symbolism.

" *Kanchi* :—(entering) Queen-mother, I see you too on this road ! I am a traveller of the same path as yourself. Have no fear of me, O Queen !

Sudarshana :—" It is well, King of Kanchi, that we should be going together, side by side—this is

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> but right. I came on your way when I first left my home, and now I meet you again on *my way back.*"

The very change in the form of address and salutation is noteworthy. Hitherto Sudarshana was called by him Queen or Queen Sudarshana. He now calls her "Queen-Mother." The mind thus realises its real relation to the soul. It reverences and adores what it sought to possess and dominate. As long as the soul turned its face away from God, it followed the vagrant rush-light of the mind. As soon as the soul turned back towards the Light, the mind even went in advance as a servant and ceased to be a domineering master. It is well that the soul and the mind should go together in joy and good-fellowship towards God. Nay, Kanchi says that Sudarshana should not walk and that he would get her a chariot. Sudarshana says :

> "Oh, do not say so : I shall never be happy if I could not on *my way back* home tread on the dust of the road that led me away from my king. I would be deceiving myself if I were now to go in a chariot."

Surangama says :

> "King, you too are walking in the dust to-day: this road has never known anybody driving his horse or chariot over it."

Going to reach the lotus feet of God is going home and we must reach home full of deep humility, thankfulness, love, and joy.

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It is necessary to have the utmost humility throughout our spiritual life. Every feeling of pride is a great set-back. Surangama says then:

> "Look, my Queen, there on the eastern horizon comes the dawn. We have not long to walk. I see the spires of the golden turrets of the king's palace."

Which faculty of the soul can have the first sight of God's Palace if not love and self-surrender, or can have the privilege of directing the soul's vision there?

The grandfather then enters and announces: My child, it is dawn—at last!" Here again the change in the form of the address shows the poet's wondrous art and insight. The grandfather was calling her 'Queen' before, but now calls her child. Sudarshana says:

> "Your benedictions have given me God-speed, and her I am, at last."

So long as she felt that she was Queen, he went his way. Only by becoming a spiritual child of the *Guru* did she get true vision. The Lord says in Chapter IV of the *Gita*:

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्वदर्शिनः ॥

(Hence seek the knowers and realisers of God and humbly seek illumination by humility, by asking for light, and by service. They will give you illumination).

The remaining portion of the dialogue is unutterably

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beautiful and full of spiritual meaning. I shall quote it here.

" *Grandfather* :—But do you see how ill-mannered our king is? He has sent no chariot, no music band, nothing splendid or grand.

Sudarshana :—Nothing grand, did you say? Look, the sky is rosy and crimson from end to end, the air is full of the welcome of the scent of flowers.

Grandfather :—Yes, but however cruel our king may be, we cannot seek to emulate him: I cannot help feeling pain at seeing you in this state, my child. How can we bear to see you going to the king's palace attired in this poor and wretched attire? Wait a little—I am running to fetch you your Queen's garments.

Sudarshana :—Oh no, no, no! He has taken away those regal robes from me for ever—he has attired me in a servant's dress before the eyes of the whole world; what a relief this has been to me! *I am his servant now, no longer his Queen. To-day I stand at the feet of all those who can claim any relationship with him.*

Grandfather :—But your enemies will laugh at you now: how can you bear their derision?

Shudarshana :—Let their laughter and derision be immortal--let them throw dust at me in the streets: this dust will to-day be the powder with which I shall deck myself before meeting my lord.

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Grandfather :—After this, we shall say nothing. Now let us play the last game of our Spring festival—instead of the pollen of flowers let the south breeze blow and scatter dust of lowliness in every direction! We shall go to the lord clad in the common grey of the dust. And we shall find him too covered with dust all over. For do you think the people spare him? Even he cannot escape from their soiled and dusty hands, and he does not even care to brush the dirt off his garments.

Kanchi :—Grandfather, do not forget me in this game of yours! I also will have to get this royal garment of mine soiled till it is beyond all recognition.

Grandfather—That will not take long, *my brother*! Now that you have come down so far—you will change your colour in no time. Just look at our Queen—she got into a temper with herself and thought that she could spoil her matchless beauty by flinging away all her ornaments: but this insult to her beauty has made it shine forth in tenfold radiance, and now it is in its unadorned perfection. We hear that our king is all innocent of beauty—that is why he loves all his manifold beauty of form which shines as the very ornament of his breast. And that beauty has to-day taken off its veil and cloak of pride and vanity! What could I not give to be allowed to hear the

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wonderful music and song that has filled my king's palace to-day ?

Surangama :—Lo, there rises the Sun !

This dialogue reveals how when humility and love are evolved in the soul, its power of realising beauty is heightened and its utterance becomes musical and sweet. Then the beauty of the dawn and the fragrance of flowers are realised by the soul as more attractive than any display of human pomp. The soul recognises that true joy lies in service—not only in service of God but also in service of all lovers and servants of God. Even the mind desires to have its royal garment full of the common dust of the earth. Humility and self-surrender have but increased the beauty of the soul. Finally, Surangama who pointed to the dawn now points to the coming of the golden orb of the sun. Indeed when in utter humility of spirit the soul seeks God with passionate determination, the sun of illumination shines forth and the long night of sin and sorrow is lost in light. Who can show this sun if not Surangama (*Prapathi* and *Bhakthi*) ? Even though the Guru helps us, it is our own *Prapathi* and *Bhakthi* that could show us the beauty of the face of God.

Now we come to the wonderful last scene when the human soul is face to face with the Eternal Lover and Bridegroom in the Dark Chamber of the Heart and sees His radiance flooding the heart with love and light.

Sudarshana :—Lord, do not give me back the

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honour which you once did turn away from me! I am the servant of your feet—I only seek the privilege of serving you.

King:—Will you be able to bear me now?

Sudarshana:—Oh yes, yes, I shall. Your sight repelled me because I had sought to find you in the pleasure-garden, in my Queen's chambers: there even your meanest servant looks handsomer than you. That fever of longing has left my eyes for ever. You are not beautiful, my lord—you stand beyond all comparisons!

King:—That which can be comparable with me lies within yourself.

Sudarshana:—If this be so, then that too is beyond comparison. Your love lies in me—you are mirrored in that love, and you see your face reflected in me: nothing of this mine, it is all yours, O Lord!

King:—I open the doors of this dark room to-day—the game is finished here! Come, come with me now, come outside—*into the light*!

Sudarshana:—Before I go, let me bow at the feet of my lord of darkness, my cruel, my terrible, my peerless one!

Thus God leads the soul into the light, as it is now fit to realise and enjoy Him both in the dark chamber of the heart and in the universe as a whole.

Thus ends this wonderful drama of the soul. It is

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peerless in its spiritual beauty and depth of vision. It is even more beautiful than Krishna Misra's *Prabhoda-chandrodaya*—a drama where, in noble and musical Sanskrit, the life of the soul is depicted in allegory. We may quote here a stanza from it as it well describes the state of exaltation attained by the Mind and the Soul in Tagore's play. It is uttered by the human soul.

प्रशान्तारातिरगमद्विवेकः कृतकृत्यतां ।
नीरजस्के सदानन्दे पदे चाहं निवेशितः ॥

[My faculty of discrimination has attained the fulness of its power by all its manifold enemies being laid low : and I have been dowered with the state of endless spiritual rapture free from all taint of pride and sin].

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CHAPTER VII.

THE POST OFFICE.

It is man's proud privilege—while at the same time it is his most perplexing problem—to seek to solve the mystery of life and death. After all is said and done, after glorious achievement and measureless aspiration, we cannot but realise the shadow of death over everything human, the inevitableness of the hour when lips most sweet of song shall be hushed in death and hands strong to serve and save shall lie in helpless and relaxed weakness for ever. Every parting brings tears to the eyes and agony to the heart, and makes us cry out: "Is this the end? Is this the end?" The most perfectly true and beautiful representation of this mood is found in the famous lines occurring in Shakespeare's *Tempest*:

> "We are such stuff
> As dreams are made of, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep."

The same idea occurs in the *Bhagawad-Gita*:

> अव्यक्तादीनि भूतानि व्यक्तमध्यानि भारत ।
> अव्यक्तनिधनान्येव तत्र का परिदेवना ॥ (*Chap. II.*)

(The secrets of birth are unrevealed to our gaze; we but know the brief moments of life; the secrets of

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death are equally unrevealed to our gaze. What is the use of despair and lamentation ?)

When the grief of parting is most acute, what strikes the mind is the desolation wrought by the cruel hand of death. The evanescence of life and the gloom that the contemplation of this casts over the loving heart are more often described by poets than the higher truths of life, because death is a cruel fact that cannot be ignored, while the intimations that we get of the soul's immortal life are few and fitful and are insufficient to allay our sorrow or irradiate our inner gloom with the dawn of assured conviction. English poetry contains innumerable beautiful passages descriptive of the fleeting character of human life and of death being of the very constitution of things. Shirley sings :

> " The glories of our blood and state
> Are shadows, not substantial things ;
> There is no armour against fate ;
> Death lays his icy hand on kings."

Gray says in a famous stanza :

> " The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
> And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
> Await alike the inevitable hour :—
> The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

Moore's poem 'the world is all a fleeting show' contains the following sorrowful lines :

> " Poor wanderers of a stormy day,
> From wave to wave we are driven,
> And fancy's flash and reason's ray
> Serve but to light the troubled way."

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As can well be expected we find this mood as well as the higher buoyant and triumphant moods expressed in most melodious verse in Tennyson's *In Memoriam.*

Sometimes poets have treated this evanescence of life and the mystery of life and death in a light, graceful fashion that hardly hides the heartbreak in the assumed gaiety of tone. One of the most beautiful instances of this is the following poem by Mrs. Barbauld:

> " Life ! I know not what thou art,
> But know that thou and I must part;
> And when, or how, or where we met
> I own to me's a secret yet.
> Life! we've been long together
> Through pleasant and through cloudy weather;
> 'Tis hard to part when friends are dear—
> Perhaps 't will cost a sigh, a tear;
> —Then steal away, give little warning.
> Choose thine own time ;
> Say not Good Night,—but in some brighter clime
> Bid me Good Morning."

The higher and more hopeful view of life and of the immortality of the soul is won by the human heart through the revelations of religion, the analysis of the philosopher, and the intuitions of the poet. It is not my purpose here to elaborate these aspects. But we must remember that the method of the poet .in intuitively realising the higher truths and communicating them to the world is quite different from that of the saint or of the philosopher. The faculty of imagination is closely allied

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to that of spiritual perception, and the poet who is dowered with supreme imagination realises intuitively the truths of the spirit. His imaginative faculty leads him to express the relations between the seen and the unseen and the deep facts of the life of the soul in terms of human relations and observed facts of nature. Hence it is that he convinces and uplifts our minds in a more direct and immediate and effective way than the saint or the philosopher. His magic of melody adds beauty and vividness to his concrete method, and we go from his presence with a new light in our faces, a new clarity in our minds, and a new rapture in our hearts, though the golden declarations of religion are more positive and the conclusions of the philosopher are more logically demonstrated. Mr. W. B. Yeats in his admirable introduction to Tagore's *Gitanjali* describes the manner in which the facts of life and nature become full of deep spiritual meaning and appeal to the mystical poet : "The traveller in the red-brown clothes that he wears that dust may not show upon him, the girl searching in her bed for the petals fallen from the wreath of her royal lover, the servant or the bride awaiting the master's home-coming in the empty house, are images of the heart turning to God. Flowers and rivers, the blowing of conch-shells, the heavy rain of the Indian July, or the parching heat, are images of the moods of that heart in union or in separation; and a man sitting in a boat upon a river playing upon a lute, like one of

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those figures full of mysterious meaning in a Chinese picture, is God Himself." One of the most perfect instances of such poetic method and intuition is the famous poem of *Crossing the Bar* by Tennyson. It is full of the most faultless beauty of thought and word, and displays the poetic mood *par excellence* at its highest point of perfection.

" Sunset and evening star,
  And one clear call for me !
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
  When I put out to sea,
But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
  Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
  Draws again home.
Twilight and evening bell,
  And after that the dark !
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
  When I embark ;
For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
  The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
  When I have crost the bar. "

The Post Office is more full of this beautiful symbolism than any other writing of his except *The King of the Dark Chamber*. Mr. Yeats no doubt says in his preface to it : "When this little play was performed in London a year ago by the Irish players, some friends of mine discovered much detailed allegory, the Headman being one principle of social life, the Curdseller or

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Gaffer another, but the meaning is less intellectual, more emotional and simple. The deliverance sought and won by the dying child is the same deliverance which rose before his imagination, Mr. Tagore has said, when once in the early dawn he heard, amid the noise of a crowd returning from some festival, this line out of an old village song, " Ferryman, take me to the other shore of the river." It may come at any moment of life, though the child discovers it in death, for it always comes at the moment when the 'I' seeking no longer for gains that cannot be 'assimilated with its spirit,' is able to say, 'All my work is thine.' (*Sadhana*, pp. 162-3). On the stage the little play shows that it is very perfectly constructed, and conveys to the right audience an emotion of gentleness and peace." Undoubtedly no one but a great poet has the right of entry into the innermost heart of another great poet; and hence we must treat the above interpretation with all the respect that it deserves so amply and well. But we must see that there are certain special and unique differentia of the Indian genius that make it possible for an Indian to enter into the spirit of an Indian's wisdom in a manner beyond the powers of any outside student, however sympathetic, talented, and endowed he may be. I have already stated in my general sketch of Tagore's genius how mysticism of the higher and diviner order is of the very essence of his conception of life. The child in the play is not merely a warm, living, and true-hearted child but

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is much more, though even treating the play as Mr. Yeats has done we arrive at truths of great beauty. We must try to understand the poet with the help of the hint that he has given as abovesaid in Mr. Yeats' preface: "The deliverance sought and won by the dying child is the same deliverance which rose before imagination, Mr. Tagore has said, when once in the early dawn he heard, amid the noise of a crowd returning from some festival, this line out of an old village song, "Ferryman, take me to the other shore of the river.'" An ordinary, worldly mind would, and could, see nothing in this. But to the mystical poet to whom the divine aspect of things is a radiant reality, the effect is marvellous. Amidst the noises and distractions of life, the golden call of God's voice to go to the farther shore of the river of life and live in the light of His love for ever is borne in on our minds and hearts by the line 'Ferryman, take me to the other shore of the river,' being wafted to our ears unexpectedly. Sri Sankara's Mohamudgara says :

" इहसंसारे बहुदुस्तारे कृपया पारे पाहि मुरारे । "

(O God, lead me through Thy Mercy to the farther shore of this river of wordly life which I am unable to cross, however much I try).

God is called the Tharaka Brahma (तारक ब्रह्म)—He who helps us to cross. The same high symbolism is found in all this as in Tennyson's *Crossing the Bar.* Though the study of the play as it is without attempting

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any study of its inner meaning is interesting, and though the study of it in a spirit of ordinary symbolism treating Amal as a boy attaining deliverance through death yields us valuable results, yet the subtlest and most delicate and fascinating elements of beauty in the play and its most uplifting lessons and ideas will be realised by us only if we understand the play in the light of the higher symbolism.

I shall here adopt the method of narrating the story of the play interpreting the characters and the dialogue in the light of the higher symbolism as above said. I shall, however, as I go on dwell also on the other two aspects also, so that the reader may at the same time realise the full beauty of this remarkable play. Before I proceed to do this work, I wish to say that the translator Mr. Devabrata Mukerjea has done his work very well on the whole. It is always difficult to give in translation a colloquial and natural air to dramatic dialogue. But the translator must remember that no one will take his work seriously as an original work, and hence he must guard against a too frequent and injudicious introduction of conversational forms current in the tongue into which the play is translated. This defect is noticeable in some places in this translation, and I wish that the translator had avoided it and had placed the work before the poet himself whose powers in the art of English prose composition are remarkable and whose prose has been described by the *Quarterly Review* as

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"this flower of English Prose." Such phrases as "By Jove," "I'm jiggered." "There'll be a great to-do," "That's him," etc., ought not to be allowed to mar the beauty of this marvellous play.

Madhav, a rich man who had prospered in the world by his thorough worldliness unredeemed by any spiritual effort or aspiration, is childless. He brings up as his foster-son a beautiful boy named Amal. The very names are significant. Madhav means 'lord of worldly prosperity.' Amal means 'the pure and stainless one.' The poet displays the most wonderful insight and art in making Amal the foster-son of Madhav. Madhav symbolises the worldly life, and Amal symbolises the pure spiritual life. In not making Amal the natural-born son of Madhav the poet shows how the pure spiritual life can never be born of the merely worldly life. Surely the poet meant something by making Amal the foster-son of Madhav. So far as the mere story is concerned, and even in regard to the meaning and underlying idea hinted in Mr. Yeats' preface, it was enough to make Amal the natural-born son of Madhav. We must pause and see why the poet did otherwise. Again, by making Madhav adopt this beautiful boy, the poet shows how the only chance of redemption for the worldly man is by seeking intimate alliance with the spiritual life. He merely loves it in a blind way at first but through its contact he begins to lose his old love of wealth for its own sake ; he sees the ice of his frigid

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feelings melt beneath the warmth of the golden sunshine of love; and he comes into contact with the higher truths and presences of life. But more of this later on.

Amal is very ill, and Madhav is in reality uplifted all the more and purified and spiritualised by this baptism of suffering, though he feels heartbroken at the coming loss of the one real joy that came into his life late and was leaving it so soon. He says :

> " What a state I am in ! Before he came, nothing mattered ; I felt so free. But now that he has come, goodness knows from where, my heart is filled with his dear self, and my home will be no home to me when he leaves."

The art of the poet is seen further in making Amal the son of a man who was Madhav's wife's brother by village ties. The poet seems to suggest that even in the case of two worldly natures—as those of Madhav and his wife—the woman is more emotional and spiritual than the man, and that, woman's nature being more refined and pure and transparent than that of man, the light of the spirit shines on him through her. The way in which the baser worldly passions of Madhav became purified by the advent of Amal is described by Madhav himself thus :

> " Formerly, earning was a sort of passion with me ; I simply couldn't help working for money. Now, I make money, and as I know it is all for this dear boy, earning becomes a joy to me."

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He is very anxious that Amal should live and be the light of his life and home. The physician that he calls in advises that the boy should be strictly kept within doors. The poet makes fun of the physician's pedantry which is as great as his healing power is slight. The physician seems to represent the sum of physical and worldly sciences that seek to keep within the bondage of the senses the spirit struggling to live in freedom beneath the overarching love and grace and mercy of God.

As soon as the physician gives his strict injunction to keep Amal indoors, he goes away. Then enters Gaffer by whom Tagore symbolises the poet. Naturally the poet is the truest and dearest ally of the spiritual life. Madhav says that Gaffer ought not to try to take the boy out of doors into the autumn wind and sun. Gaffer replies :

> " God bless my soul ! So I'm already as bad as autumn wind and sun, Oh !
>
> But, friend, I know something, too, of the game of keeping them indoors. When my day's work is over, I am coming in to make friends with this child of yours."

Amal then enters and pleads hard with Madhav to be let out. The following passage shows what a wonderful faculty of keen observation and vivid and natural description Tagore has. Amal says :

" See, there where Auntie grinds lentils in the

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quvin, the squirrel is sitting with his tail up and with his wee hands he's picking up the broken grains of lentils and crunching them. Can't I run up there?"

Madhav says that this could not be done as the doctor had forbidden it. The following dialogue is full of keen irony and shows how the poet has deep contempt for the so-called learning which merely consists in book-knowledge out of touch with the deep fundamental facts of life.

Madhav :—Doctor says it's bad for you to be out.

Amal :—How can the doctor know?

Madhav :—What a thing to say! The doctor can't know and he reads such huge books!

Amal :—Does his book-learning tell him everything?

Madhav :—Of course, don't you know!

Amal (*with a sigh*) :—Ah, I am so stupid? I don't read books.

Madhav :—Now, think of it, very, very learned people are all like you; they are never out of doors.

Amal :—Are'nt they really?

Madhav :—No, how can they? Early and late they toil and moil at their books, and they've eyes for nothing else."

Thus the poet shows how worthless mere blind book-learning is and how it is as much of an obstacle

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to the higher life as the selfish worldly mammon-worshipping life. Madhav asks Amal to be a learned man, but Amal declines the honour and says that he prefers to go about and see God's world. The following dialogue is full of profound symbolism :—

Amal :—" See that far-away hill from our window—I often long to go beyond those hills and right away.

Madhav :—Oh, you silly ! As if there's nothing more to be done but just get up to the top of that hill and away ! Eh ! You don't talk sense, my boy. Now listen, since that hill stands there upright as a barrier, it means you can't get beyond it. Else, what was the use in heaping up so many large stones to make such a big affair of it, eh ?

Amal :—Uncle, do you think it is meant to prevent us crossing over ? It seems to me because the earth can't speak, it raises its hands to the sky and beckons. And those who live far off, and sit alone by their windows, can see the signal."

One cannot but call to mind here the marvellous *Hymn before sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni* by Coleridge.

" O dread and silent Mount ! I gazed upon thee,
Till thou, still present to the bodily sense,
Didst vanish from my thought : entranced in prayer
I worshipped the Invisible alone.

. . . .

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Thou, too, hoar Mount! with thy sky-pointing peaks,
Oft from whose feet the avalanche, unheard,
Shoots downward, glittering through the pure serene,
Into the depth of clouds that veil thy breast—
Thou too again, stupendous Mountain! thou
That as I raise my head, awhile bowed low
In adoration, upward from thy base
Slow travelling with dim eyes suffused with tears,
Solemnly seemest like a vapoury cloud
To rise before me—Rise, oh, ever rise,
Rise like a cloud of incense from the Earth!
Thou kingly spirit throned among the hills,
Thou dread ambassador from Earth to Heaven,
Great Hierarch! tell thou the silent sky,
And tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun,
Earth, with her thousand voices, praises God."

The poet's many-sided genius is seen in his exquisite pictures of the child's mind and heart in this play—though the finest expression of this aspect of his inner endowment is to be found in *The Crescent Moon*. They are scattered in profusion throughout the play and show the exquisite play of the child's imagination which brings into focus things far and near in space and time and sheds over them the unfamiliar yet beautiful and radiant light of its soul. Amal longs to go over the hills and far away. The mountain seems to him the uplifted arm of the earth beckoning to the sky. Here is another exquisite touch which brings back to each of us his happy childhood.

Amal :—"Oh, I will walk on, crossing so many

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streams, wading through water. Everybody will be asleep with their doors shut in the heat of the day and I will tramp on and on seeking work far, very far."

Again, he would like to take curds from the village by the red road near the old banyan tree and hawk the curds from cottage to cottage. He would like to be the King's Postman with "a lantern in his left hand and on his back a bag of letters," going through the sugar-cane field into the narrow lane to deliver the letters. He would like even to be kidnapped for the joy and romance and freedom of it. He loves to hear travellers' tales and poetic descriptions of the Parrots Isle which is a land of wonders

"Opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in fairy lands forlorn,"

where there men exist but parrots in all their beauty of form and wings fly and rest and where waterfalls come dancing down the slopes of hills and fall like molten diamonds and then make the pebbles sing as they rush over them to the sea. An even sweeter fancy of his is his dream of a "lovely little bride with a pair of pearl drops in her ears and dressed in a lovely red *saree*," and his deep desire to serve Sudha and get for her "some flowers from the very topmost branches right out of sight." Perhaps the loftiest and sublimest of the fancies is his determination to ask the king to show him the Polar Star.

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But I am anticipating much of what is to come hereafter in my eager desire to reveal the wonderful art of the greatest poet of modern India in all its fulness. Amal, in obedience to the doctor's injunction and his foster-father's wishes, stops within doors by the side of the window opening on the roadside. This gives the poet the opportunity to unroll before our gaze the wonderful panorama of colour and fragrance and sweetness that make up the sum of Indian life. It helps him also to show the evolution of the spiritual life by reason of its intimate touch with God's creation. The pictures chosen show the poet's never failing instinct for what is at the same time artistically charming and spiritually uplifting. I shall briefly describe the drama of outer life as it is played on the world's stage before the eyes of Amal seated by the window opening on the street.

First comes the curdseller. He is somewhat rough when the child stops him but is unable to buy the curds for want of money. The art of the poet is seen in making the curdseller lose his anger in a sudden access of pity and love by 'one touch of nature that makes the whole world kin." '

" *Amal* :—I would go with you if I could.

Dairyman :—With me ?

Amal :—Yes, I seem to feel homesick when I hear you call from far down the road.

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Dairyman :—(lowering his yoke-pole). Whatever are you doing here, my child ?"

To the man coarsened by hard work and loveless looks from persons who treat him as one born to minister to their comforts the loving accents from the pure, fresh lips of the child come as a revelation of gentleness and love and bring out the godlike elements in him. The following dialogue speaks for itself :—

" *Dairyman* :—Dear child, will you have some curds? Yes, do.

Amal :—But I have no money.

Dairyman :—No, no, no, don't talk of money ! You'll be so happy if you take some curds from me.

Amal :—Say, have I kept you too long ?

Dairyman :—Not a bit ; it has been no loss to me at all ; you have taught me how to be happy selling curds."

Words fail me to describe how deeply I admire the insight and art shown in this. The dairyman to whom life was a mere affair of selling curds and making money and to whom man was a mere buying agent is uplifted into a higher realm of emotion. He is made to feel real joy in his work. I call to mind here the famous passage in the Gita which says:

न बुद्धिभेदं जनयेदज्ञानां कर्मसाङ्गिनां ।
जोषयेत्सर्वकर्माणि विद्वान्मुक्तः समाचरन् ॥

(The wise man should not unsettle the minds of

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those who are unaware of the higher verities and are attached to their work in life. He should make them do their work with joy, by himself doing life's work in a spirit of non-attachment and of surrender of the fruit of the work to God and as an act of worship of God). Hence it is that the dairyman goes back from Amal's spiritual presence a transformed being, uplifted by love, and taking real joy in his life's work humble though it be.

Then comes the village watchman. He is astonished at the boy's not being afraid of him. When he says that he will march the boy to the king, the boy says that that is just what he wants. The following dialogue between him and Amal is full of profound symbolism.

> " *Amal* :—Won't you sound the gong, Watchman ?
>
> *Watchman* :—Time has not yet come.
>
> *Amal* :—How curious ! Some say time has not yet come, and some say time has gone by ! But surely your time will come the moment you strike the gong !
>
> *Watchman* :—That's not possible ; I strike up the gong only when it is time."

This brings to mind the famous Sanskrit verses quoted below.

" मातानास्ति पितानास्ति नास्ति बन्धुः सहोदरः ।
अर्थं नास्ति गृहं नास्ति तस्माज्जाग्रत जाग्रत ॥
आशया बध्यते लोको कर्मणा बहुचिन्तयाः ।
आयुः क्षीणं नजानाति तस्माज्जाग्रत जाग्रत ॥

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कामः क्रोधश्च लोभश्च देहे तिष्ठन्ति तस्कराः ।
ज्ञानरत्नापहाराय तस्माज्जाग्रत जाग्रत ॥
जन्मदुःखं जरादुःखं जायादुःखं पुनःपुनः ।
संसारसागरो दुःखं तस्माज्जाग्रत जाग्रत ॥

(Thy mother will not be with thee for ever ; nor thy father nor thy brother nor other relatives ; nor thy wealth nor thy house. Therefore awake, awake.

The world is overcome by desire, by ceaseless work, and by anxious thought for the future. It knows not how life is slipping away. Therefore awake, awake.

In thy frame there lurk thieves—Desire, Passion, and Avarice—to steal the jewel of thy wisdom. Therefore awake, awake.

Life is pain ; decay is pain ; the worldly life is pain ; and a ceaseless round of worldly lives is pain. Therefore awake, awake !) . . . . .

Such were the verses sung by the beater of the drum during the four watches of the night. The dialogue between Amal and the Watchman then proceeds :

" *Amal* :—Tell me why does your gong sound ?

Watchman :—My gong sounds to tell the people Time waits for none, but goes on for ever.

Amal :—Where, to what land ?

Watchman :—That none knows.

Amal :—Then I suppose no one has ever been

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there ! Oh, I do wish to fly with the time to that land of which no one knows anything.

Watchman :—All of us have to get there one day, my child.

Amal :—Have I too ?

Watchman :—Yes, you too.

Amal :—But doctor won't let me out.

. . . .

Watchman :—One greater than he comes and lets us free.

The symbolism herein is as beautiful as it is apparent. Where does Time go ? The river of Time flows into the sea of Eternity whither the spiritual life longs to fly but whither it can go only through Divine Grace. If we were to know the value of Time aright, how well-ordered our lives would be ? The following sonnet that occurs in D. G. Rossetti's *The House of Life* may well be remembered in this connection :

"The lost days of my life until to-day,
What were they could I see them on the street
Lie as they fell ? Would they be ears of wheat
Sown once for food but trodden into clay ?
Or golden coins squandered and still to pay ?
Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet ?
Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat
The undying throats of Hell, athirst alway ?
I do not see them here ; but after death
God knows I know the faces I shall see,

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Each one a murdered self, with low last breath.
'I am thyself,—what hast thou done to me?
And I—and I—thyself, (lo! each one saith)
And thou thouself to all eternity!'"

It is the watchman that tells Amal about the King's Post Office. What does the Post Office stand for? The Post Office is the one means by which the village gets into touch with the great world. In the play it represents the agency by which our petty life gets into touch with the infinite universe of God's love and grace. Each postman represents the bearer of God's blessed gospel to the world. Amal cries out: "I'll be the King's postman when I grow up." The poet's subtle and ironical humour comes out well in the following dialogue.

Watchman:—"Ha! ha! Postman, indeed! Rain or shine, rich or poor, from house to house delivering letters—that's very great work."

He evidently thinks highly of his own petty work in the village and despises the postman. Amal's reply is full of beauty.

"That's what—I'd like best. What makes you smile so? Oh, yes, your work is great too."

Immediately afterwards the watchman who was so proud of his work catches sight of the village headman and runs away. Such is temporal authority which in all cases is afraid of some other authority somewhere or other, and is a slave unto the strong while it is a tyrant

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unto the weak. The art of the poet is seen very well in the following dialogue:

Amal :—"I suppose the King's made him our headman here.

Watchman :—Made him? Oh, no! A fussy busybody! He knows so many ways of making himself unpleasant that everybody is afraid of him. It's just a game for the likes of him, making trouble for everybody."

This shows very well indeed how all temporal authority is treated in its absence, and how the heart's homage is never won but by love.

Amal then calls the Headman. The combination of ignorance, self-importance, contempt for others, and thorough worldliness in the Headman, who seems to symbolise temporal authority generally, is very amusing to see. Has not Shakespeare said :—

"But man, proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,—
His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven
As make the angels weep."

Measure for Measure.

How in all temporal authority vanity goes along with eagerness for flattery is well-brought out in the following dialogue.

Headman :—Who is yelling after me on the highway? Oh it's you, is it, you wretched monkey?

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Amal:—You're the headman. Everybody minds you.

Headman :—(looking pleased). Yes, oh yes, they do! They must !

Amal:—Do the King's postmen listen to you ?

Headman:—The've got to. By Jove, I'd like to see" —

The Headman is tickled by Amal's expectation of a letter from the king, and his anger turns on Madhav by some curious mental deflection. He says :

"Madhav is a devilish swell nowadays. He made a little pile ; and so kings and padishas are every day talk with his people. Let me find him once and I'll make him dance. Oh you,—you snipper snapper ! I ll get the King's letter sent to your house—indeed I will !"

Then comes a girl, and this is one of the loveliest portions of the play. The poet's art and insight deserve the highest praise here. He has brought out in a few words the entire nature of womanhood—its grace, its emotional sweetness, and its pre-occupation with the actual work of life while shedding on it the radiance of love. The girl's name is Sudha and she is the daughter of a flower-seller. The name means "nectar"—and a more admirable name for a girl can hardly be imagined. The following dialogue between the girl and the boy is very fine :

"*Girl* :—You make me think of some late star of the morning ! Whatever's the matter with you ?

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Amal :—I don't know; the doctor : won't let me out.

Girl :—Ah me ! Don't go then ! Should listen to the doctor. . . . Let me close the window a bit for you."

How well this shows that in spite of her grace and emotional refinement woman always stands up for the established order ! But this is because of her love. It is her love for Amal and her desire to save him from getting worse that make her think of closing the window. The poet seems to hint also that woman's nature is on the whole less dreamy and more practical than man's. When Amal says that he would blossom into a champa flower and asks if she would be his sister Parul, she replies :

> "You are silly ! How can I be sister Parul when I am Sudha and my mother is Sasi, the flower-seller ? I have to weave so many garlands a day."

She then goes away promising to bring him a flower. I shall refer later on to the last scene in the poem wherein Sudha brings the promised flower.

Then enter a troop of boys bent on play. Amal persuades them to play in front of the window with his toys. He then asks them to bring one of the king's postmen so that the latter may come to know him, and they promise to do so. Who but pure-hearted children are beloved of the bearer of God's gospel, for has not Christ said : "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," and

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"Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven?" This is the real reason why Tagore has made Amal a little boy.

In Act II Amal is shown as confined to his bed. The Gaffer enters as a Fakir and tells him about the Parrots' Isle and reawakens Amal's longing for release. I have already referred to the description of the Parrots' Isle. The following bit of description is also worth remembering :

> "Indeed, they (the parrots) live among the green hills ; and in the time of the sunset when there is a red glow on the hillside, all the birds with their green wings go flocking to their nests."

Amal then asks Gaffer if the King's letter is coming. Gaffer says that the letter is coming. There is a slight element of satire in the poet's description of Gaffer which ought not to be ignored. The ordinary poet, though dowered with imagination and hence able to get glimpses of the truths of the spirit, does not fully believe in his intuitions. After Amal describes to him the coming of the postman, he says :

> "My eyes are not young, but you make me see all the same."

The following dialogue is full of the deepest and truest symbolism.

> *Amal* :—"Say, Fakir, do you know the King who has this Post Office?

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Gaffer :—I do ; I go to him for my alms every day.

Amal :—Good ! When I get well, I must have my alms from him, may n't I ?

Gaffer :—You won't need to ask, my dear, he'll give it to you of his own accord.

Amal :—No, I will go to his gate and cry ' Victory to thee, O King !' and dancing to the tabor's sound, ask for alms. Won't it be nice ?

Gaffer :—It will be splendid, and if you're with me, I shall have my full share."

What a suggestion is here as to the hierarchy of values even in the higher life ! Even though the poet gets his dower of insight and vision through Divine grace, it is the man of spiritual life on whom the fulness of Divine love falls, and it is through him that even the poet gets his full dower of higher joy. A poet's vision of spiritual things is like a pure bubbling fountain but the vision of a saint living a truly spiritual life is like the Ganges bearing its refreshing waters far and wide.

Madhav then comes and says that Gaffer and Amal have got him into trouble by saying that the king was going to send messages to them and that the village headman has had the king informed of the fact anonymously. Gaffer then tells Amal not to be anxious as the king will not be cross at all. Then the Doctor enters and asks even the window to be shut. The headman enters after this and says that a letter has come from the

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King for Amal and gives a blank slip of paper. Gaffer says that the letter announces that he is coming with the State physician to see Amal. Though the village headman has done all this in a spirit of cruel fun, the King has willed that Gaffer's words come true. The King's herald announces that the king has sent his greatest physician to attend on his young friend, and will himself come in the night.

The state physician then comes and feels Amal's body and orders all the doors and windows to be opened.

> *State Physician* :—"What's this? How close it is here! Open wide all the doors and windows. (Feeling Amal's body.) How do you feel, my child?
>
> *Amal* :—I feel very well, Doctor, very well. All pain is gone. How fresh and open! I can see all the stars now twinkling from the other side of the dark."

The state physician represent the Grace of God—the universal healer of all suffering from sin and sorrow. He overrules the earthly doctor's injunction about shutting out God's light and air and opens all the avenues of light to irradiate the soul struggling to be free. He asks Amal:

> "Will you feel well enough to leave your bed when the king comes in the middle watches of the night?"

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Amal replies :

"Of course, I'm dying to be about for ever so long. I'll ask the king to find me the polar star. I must have seen it often, but I don't know exactly which it is."

The spiritual truths contained in these few simple-seeming words are many and profound. The Polar star represents the highest peace and radiance of spiritual rapture—unchanged amidst the changing lesser lights. The poet hints a great deal in saying that Amal must have seen it often already though he cannot locate it now. All religions say that spiritual rapture is a re-attainment ; that it is not a thing to be newly got, for what is born in time must die and perish ; and that it has existed for ever and has to be realised by us.

The State Physician objects to the headman being in Amal's room, for what place has temporal authority in the regions of the higher life ?. But at Amal's intercession he allows the headman to remain. The following dialogue is full of beauty and truth :

Madhav (whispering into Amal's ear). "My child, the king loves you. He is coming himself. Beg for a gift from him. You know our humble circumstances.

Amal :—Don't you worry, uncle—I've made up my mind about it.

Madhav :—What is it, my child ?

Amal :—I shall ask him to make me one of his

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postmen that I may wander far and wide, delivering his message from door to door.

Madhav (slapping his forehead). Alas, is that all ?"

Thus even in the presence of God the giver of every bounty, and allied to Amal the pure spiritual nature, the worldly soul is not able to rise to a realisation of higher joys or pray for a higher gift than the gift of more worldly prosperity. Amal, on the other hand, yearns to be one of the many bearers of His message to the worlds.

The following conversation is equally beautiful and pregnant with meaning :

"*Physician* :—Now, be quiet all of you. Sleep is coming over him. I'll sit by his pillow ; he's dropping asleep. Blow out the oil-lamp. Only let the star-light stream in. Hush, he sleeps.

Madhav (addressing Gaffer). What are you standing there for like a statue, folding your palms ? I am nervous.—Say, are there good omens ? Why are they darkening the room ? How will star-light help ?

Gaffer :—"Silence, unbeliever." Madhav thinks that the smoking oil-lamps of the world give more helpful light than the serene radiance of God's stars. We get here another beautiful picture of Gaffer standing like a statue folding his palms. The poet, being attuned to love and other diviner

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elements of life, realises the divine presence and is full of the spirit of prayer.

Now enters Sudha, and gives the play a heavenly ambrosial close. I wish to quote the entire scene here.

"*Sudha* :—Amal!

Physician :—He's asleep.

Sudha :—I have some flowers for him. May'nt I give them into his own hand?

Physician :—Yes, you may.

Sudha :—When will he be awake?

Physician :—Directly He comes and calls him.

Sudha :—Will you whisper a word for me in his ear?

Physician :—What shall I say?

Sudha :—Tell him Sudha has not forgotten him.

Thus comes release from earthly bondage to the soul struggling to be free—diffusing happiness and joy all round, giving to all workers a new joy in their work and a new love for all, uplifting even souls immersed in worldliness, and last but not least crowned with the garland of the love of pure and true womanhood.

Such is the play and such are the ideas contained in it. A great poet's work is like shot silk full of many glancing and shimmering colours; and now one heavenly tint seems to be prominent and now another. I do not claim for the above interpretation any degree of finality or thoroughness. But I only claim that there is ample warrant for the interpretation. In any event there

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is no doubt that the play is full of deep spiritual meaning and that the poet has employed in it the resources of the highest symbolism which is his unique and priceless gift, and hence it is our duty to try to realise the great spiritual truths hinted and enforced in this wonderful play.

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CHAPTER VIII.

TRANSLATION OF ONE HUNDRED POEMS OF KABIR.

I have already dealt with Tagore's mystical genius in my introductory chapter and shown how in order to understand him aright we must know the true inwardness of the great Bhakti movement in this holy land, the beauty of the songs and poems of Kabir, Chaitanya, and others, and the gracious significance and emotional appeal of the Sufi doctrines.

Evelyn Underhill, who has helped Tagore in translating one hundred poems of Kabir, has written an admirable introduction to the work. She speaks of "that mystical religion of love which everywhere makes its appearance at a certain level of spiritual culture, and which creeds and philosophies are powerless to kill." Kabir was a disciple of Ramananda and realised the unity of the doctrines of the Bhakti cult and of Sufism. He was not only a great saint but also a great mystical poet and musician whose poems and songs are "the spontaneous expressions of his vision and his love." He was a weaver and earned his living by working at the loom. As Evelyn Underhill well says: "He knew how to combine vision and industry; the work of his hands helped rather than hindered the

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impassioned meditation of his heart.......It was from out of the heart of the common life that he sang his rapturous lyrics of divine love." He disliked and denounced all formalism, empty and loveless asceticism, pride of birth and caste and rank, and worldliness, which are the worst foes of light. Above all, his utmost simplicity of emotional appeal combined with the richness of mystical apprehension of Truth and Beauty makes his poems a perpetual source of delight and spiritual uplift. By the most universal and elementary facts and relations of life he brings home to us the higher joys and affinities of the life divine. As Evelyn Underhill says: "There are in his universe no fences between the 'natural' and 'supernatural' worlds; everything is a part of the creative play of God, and therefore—even in its humblest details—capable of revealing the player's mind.......All aspects of the universe possess equal authority as sacramental declarations of the presence of God." The introduction brings out also two other very great traits of Kabir's genius. "Movement, rhythm, perpetual change, forms an integral part of Kabir's vision of Reality. Though the Eternal and Absolute is ever present to his consciousness, yet his concept of the Divine Nature is essentially dynamic." Again, "the constant insistence in simplicity and directness, the hatred of all abstractions and philosophizings, the ruthless criticism of external religion; these are amongst his most marked characteristics."

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My object is not to expound here the great beauties of Kabir's songs but to show the divinely beautiful parallelism of sentiment and style between Kabir and Tagore—both thoroughly Indian, full of true and lofty mystical genius, and dowered with golden beauty of style. I wish to do so both for purpose of showing the true poetic and spiritual descent of Tagore and of making my readers recognise how though the mortals speak many tongues the immortals speak but one. Both are dowered with that keen and luminous inner vision before which the shams and lies of life flee away and life is seen in all its fulness and beauty ; both have an uttermost simplicity of emotional appeal and describe truly and transfigure with the divine radiance of love the universal elements in life ; both are great musicians and poets in whose hands words and sounds become consecrated by dedication to God ; both denounce in deathless words formalism, blind and unfruitful asceticism, pride and narrowness of vision and worldliness which bar us as with triple steel from the shrine of Truth and Love; both teach us how love and renunciation and service are the best and loftiest and sweetest things in life ; and both have entered the sacred innermost shrine of God's love with praying lips and adoring hearts, have seen the blessed vision, have become full of love's ecstasy, and have realised God's love in myraid ways, and communicate to the world what they have been privileged to see.

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Both of them teach us that we must get rid of our formalism, our adhesion to the letter forgetting and even disclaiming the spirit. Christ has told us how the letter killeth while the spirit giveth life. Formalism makes us feel self-satisfied and hardens the heart, and thus banishes from within us the divine elements of self-surrender, self-sacrifice, humility, and love. Kabir says:

"There is nothing but water at the holy bathing places; and I know that they are useless, for I have bathed in them.
The images are all lifeless, they cannot speak; I know, for I have cried aloud to them.
The Purana and the Koran are mere words; lifting up the curtain, I have seen.
Kabir gives utterance to the words of experience; and he knows very well, that all other things are untrue." (Pages 49-50).

"The yogi dyes his garments, instead of dyeing his mind in the colours of love:
He sits within the temple of the Lord, leaving Brahma to worship a stone.
He pierces holes in his ears, he has a great beard and matted locks, he looks like a goat:
He goes forth into the wilderness, killing all his desires, and turns himself into aneunuch.
He shaves his head and dyes his garments; he reads the Gita and becomes a mighty talker.

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Kabir says : 'You are going to the doors of death, bound hand and foot !' "

(Pages 69-70).

"O servant, where dost thou seek me ? Lo ! I am beside thee.

I am neither in temple nor in mosque : I am neither in Kaaba nor in Kailash : Neither am I in rites and ceremonies, nor in yoga and renunciation.

If thou art a true seeker, thou shalt at once see Me : thou shalt meet me in a moment of time.

Kabir says : " O Sadhu ! God is the breath of all breath."

(Page 1).

Tagore says in the *Gitanjali* :

"Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads ! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut ? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before these !

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil !

Deliverance ? Where is this deliverance to be found ? Our master himself has joyfully taken

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upon him the bonds of creation ; he is bound with us all for ever.

Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense ! What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained ! Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow."

(Pages 8-9).

Kabir and Tagore condemn further the vain, arrogant, self-sufficient, self-satisfied and fruitless asceticism that thinks highly of itself, runs away from all spheres of love and service, and seeks the God of Love and Mercy through self-mortification and loveless self-discipline. Kabir says :

" Because he lives in solitude, therefore the yogi says that his home is far away.

Your Lord is near ; yet you are climbing the palm-tree to seek Him."

(Page 28).

" Dance, my heart ! dance to-day with joy.

The strains of love fill the days and the nights with music, and the world is listening to its melodies.

Mad with joy, life and death dance to the rhythm of this music. The hills and the sea and the earth dance. The world of man dances in laughter and tears.

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Why put on the robe of the monk, and live aloof from the world in lonely pride?

Behold! my heart dances in the delight of a hundred arts, and the Creator is well pleased."

(Page 38-39).

"It is not austerities that mortify the flesh which are pleasing to the Lord,

When you leave off your clothes and kill your senses, you do not please the Lord:

The man who is kind and who practises righteousness, who remains passive amidst the affairs of the world, who considers all creatures on earth as his own self,

He attains the Immortal Being, the true God is ever with him. Kabir says: "He attains the true name whose words are pure, and who is free from pride and conceit." (Page 69)

Tagore also gives us the same great gospel in his poems. Indeed his unique glory consists in his harmonising the conflict of ideals in our land due to the commingling of the civilisations of the West and of the East. He leads us to that radiant region where work and service thrive in joy side by side with thought and contemplation beneath the overarching skies of love lit by the sun of poesy and the full moon of song. This was our immemorial Indian ideal though during the dark ages of Indian history we fell away from ideals of

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patriotic work and service. The greatness of Tagore's work consists in the harmony abovesaid and in leading us to retain the spirit of our great civilisation while catching the spirit of modern enlightenment and progress and national service. That he has had the same appeal in Japan also is clear from Professor Hirose's article in *The Journal of the Indo-Japanese Association.* Professor Hirose says: "Since the opening of intercourse with the Western countries and the introduction of advanced Western civilisation, our thinking world has been invaded by Western thoughts and apparently we have gradually lost some of the traditional traits of old Japan. Of late we have awakened to the inadvisability of discarding our own ways and manners in our zeal to take good things from other nations. It is a matter for congratulation that the thoughts of Tagore have found their way to the minds of thinking Japanese, who have begun to awake from their exclusive adoration of Western civilisation, and have aroused within them a spirit to love and respect the old traditions of their own country. In that respect, I think, our nation is greatly indebted to Mr. Tagore." Tagore himself has said: "Our ancient civilisation was really complete in all its parts and was not a spiritual shade devoid of a material body." I shall quote here the following beautiful poem embodying his ideals of work and service.

"Deliverance is not for me in renunciation.—I feel

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the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught of thy wine of various colours and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim.

My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame and place them before the altar of thy temple.

No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight.

Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of joy, and all my desires ripen into fruits of love."

(*Gitanjali*, page 68).

"God commanded, 'stop, fool, leave not thy home,' but still he heard not.

God sighed and complained, 'why does my servant wander to seek me, forsaking me?" '

(*The Gardener*, pages 130-131).

"No, my friends, I shall never leave my hearth and home, and retire into the forest solitude, if rings no merry laughter in its echoing shade, and if the end of no saffron mantle flutters in the wind; if its silence is not deepened by soft whispers.

I shall never be an ascetic."

(*The Gardener*, page 78).

Both these great poets recognise at the same time that

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the crown and fruition of work and service is love and realisation. Kabir says:

"So long as man clamours for the I and the Mine, his works are as naught:
When all love of the I and the Mine is dead, then the work of the Lord is done.
For work has no other aim than the getting of knowledge.
When that comes, then work is put away.
The flower blooms for the fruit: when the fruit comes, the flower withers.
The musk is in the deer, but it seeks it not within itself; it wanders in quest of grass."

(Pages 5-6).

Tagore sings:

"Away from the sight of thy face my heart knows no rest or respite, and my work becomes an endless toil in a shoreless sea of toil. To-day the summer has come at my window with its signs and murmurs; and the bees are flying their minstrelsy at the court of the flowering grove. Now it is time to sit quiet, face to face with thee, and to sing dedication of life in this silent and overflowing leisure."

(*Gitanjali*, pages 4-5).

Both poets bring home to our minds again and again the great truth which Christ proclaimed by saying: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you," and that our holy

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scriptures teach by the blessed sayings *Tat twam asi* and *Aham Brahmasmi.* Salvation is not a process of attaining with painful exertions what is not ours. It is a realisation of our Divine Nature, our union with the Divine. Kabir says :

> " The musk is in the deer, but it seeks it not within itself : it wanders in quest of grass." (Page 6).
>
> " Do not go to the garden of flowers ! O friend ! go not there ;
>
> In your body is the garden of flowers. Take your seat on the thousand petals of the lotus and there gaze on the Infinite Beauty." (Pages 3-4).

Tagore sings :

> " Only now and again a sadness fell upon me, and I started up from my dream and felt a sweet trace of a strange fragrance in the south wind.
>
> That vague sweetness made my heart ache with longing, and it seemed to me that it was the eager breath of summer seeking for its completion.
>
> I knew not then it was so near, that it was mine, and that this perfect sweetness had blossomed in the depth of my own heart."
>
> (*Gitanjali*, pages 16-17).

Again and again both poets make us realise the melody of God's voice heard by the soul in nature and in the dark but pure chamber of the heart. Kabir says :

> The melody of love swells forth, and the rhythm of love's detachment beats the time.

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Day and night, the chorus of music fills the heavens." (Page 17).

"There the whole sky is filled with sound, and there that music is made without fingers and without strings."

(Page 22).

" There the sky is filled with music,
There it rains nectar :
There the harp-strings jingle, and there the drums beat." (Page 23).

" I hear the melody of His flute, and I cannot contain myself . . . . . where the rhythm of the world rises and falls, thither my heart has reached." (Page 71).

Tagore sings:

" I know not how thou singest, my master! I ever listen in silent amazement.

The light of thy music illumines the world. The life breath of thy music runs from sky to sky. The holy streams of thy music breaks through all stony obstacles and rushes on.

My heart longs to join in thy song, but vainly struggles for a voice. I would speak, but speech breaks not into song, I cry out baffled. Ah, thou hast made my heart captive in the endless meshes of thy music, my master !" (Page 3).

Both poets teach us that God is to be realised in creation, that the whole world is the *lila* or sport of God,

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and that we must know and love Gods's infinite play of forms known as the universe. Kabir says:

" His form is infinite and fathomless,
He dances in rapture, and waves of form arise from His dance." (Page 33).

" His play the land and water, the whole universe !
His play the earth and the sky !
In play is the Creation spread out, in play it is established. The whole world, says Kabir, rests in his play, yet still the player remains unknown." (Page 89).

Tagore says :

" In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play and here have I caught sight of him that is formless." (Page 88).

Both poets make us realise that God is Joy (*Ananda*). Kabir says :

" He dances in rapture, and waves of form arise from His dance.
The body and the mind cannot contain themselves, when they are touched by His great joy.

. . . .

He holds all within His bliss."

(Page 33).

" The Creator brought into being the Game of Joy: and from the word 'Om' the creation sprang.
The Earth is His joy ; His joy is the sky ;
His joy is the flashing of the sun and the moon ;

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His joy is the beginning, the middle, and the end ;
His joy is eyes, darkness, and light.
Ocean and waves are his joy : His joy the Saraswati, the Jumna, and the Ganges.
The Guru is One ; and life and death, union and separation, are all His plays of joy !"

(Pages 88-89).

Tagore sings :

" Light, my light, the world-filling light, the eye-kissing light, heart-sweetening light !
Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the centre of my life ; the light strikes, my darling, the chords of my love ; the sky opens, the wind runs wild, laughter passes over the earth.
The butterflies spread their sails on the sea of light. Lilies and jasmines surge up on the crest of the waves of light.
The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, and it scatters gems in profusion.
Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling, and gladness without measure. The heaven's river has drowned its banks and the flood of joy is abroad."

(*Gitanjali*, pages 52-53).

Both poets tell us in a divinely convincing way how God yearns to save us and take us into the paradise of His love. Kabir says :

" To Thee Thou hast drawn my love, O Fakir !

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I was sleeping in my own chamber, and Thou didst awaken me; striking me with Thy voice, O Fakir!
I was drowning in the deeps of the ocean of this world, and Thou didst save me: upholding me with Thine arm, O Fakir!
Only one word and no second—and Thou hast made me tear off all my bonds, O Fakir!
Kabir says, Thou hast united Thy heart to my heart, O Fakir."'

(Page 10).

Tagore sings:

"By all means they try to hold me secure who love me in this world. But it is otherwise with thy love which is greater than theirs, and thou keepest me free.
Lest I forget them they never venture to leave me alone. But day passes after day and thou art not seen.
If I call not to thee in my prayers, if I keep not thee in my heart, thy love for me still waits for my love." (*Gitanjali*, pages 25-26).

Both poets describe ecstatically the joys of divine communion and tell us how we can attain them only by renunciation and love. Kabir says:

"I played day and night with my comrades, and now I am greatly afraid.
So high is my Lord's palace, my heart trembles to

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mount its stairs, yet I must not be shy if I would enjoy His love.
My heart must cleave to my Lover; I must withdraw my veil, and meet him with all my body:
Mine eyes must perform the ceremony of the lamps of love." (Page 11).

Tagore sings:

"My song has put off her adornments. She has no pride of dress and decoration. Ornaments would mar our union; they would come between thee and me; their jingling would drown thy whispers.
My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight. O master poet, I have sat down at thy feet. Only let me make my life simple and straight, like a flute of reed for thee to fill with music."

(*Gitanjali*, page 6).

Both poets give us very true and vivid and consoling pictures and ideas as to the true significance of the mysterious phenomena of life and death. Kabir says:

"Look upon life and death; there is no separation between them,
The right hand and the left hand are one and the same." (Page 20).

Tagore sings in one of the most beautiful poems in the *Gitanjali*.

"I was not aware of the moment when I first crossed the threshold of this life.
What was the power that made me open out into

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this vast mystery like a bud in the forest at midnight.

When in the morning I looked upon the light I felt in a moment that I was no stranger in this world, that the inscrutable without name and form had taken me in its arms in the form of my own mother.

Even so, in death the same unknown will appear as ever known to me. And because I love this life, I know I shall love death as well. The child cries out when from the right breast the mother takes it away, in the very next moment to find in the left one its consolation."

(*Gitanjali*, page 87).

Each poet brings out very clearly what is the first duty of life and what ought to be the prayer of each soul. Kabir sings in an exquisite poem :

" Hang up the swing of love to-day ! Hang the body and the mind between the arms of the Beloved, in the ecstasy of love's joy :

Bring the tearful streams of the rainy clouds to your eyes, and cover your hearts with the shadow of darkness :

Bring your face nearer to His ear, and speak of the deepest longings of your heart. Kabir says : " Listen to me, brother ! *bring the vision of the Beloved in your heart* !."

(Page 105).

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Tagore voices forth the pure and perfect and passionate prayer of the soul in the following poem :

> "Let only that little be left of me whereby I may name thee my all.
>
> Let only that little be left of my will whereby I may feel thee on every side, and come to thee in everything, and offer to thee my love every moment.
>
> Let only that little be left of me whereby I may never hide thee.
>
> Let only that little of my fetters be left whereby I am bound with thy will, and thy purpose is carried out in my life—and that is the fetter of thy love."

Such are a few of the divine resemblances of style and thought and emotion between these two great poets. I shall conclude this chapter by giving below a few other exquisite quotations from this translation of Kabir's poems by Tagore.

> "O Friend ! hope for Him whilst you live, know whilst you live, understand whilst you live ; for in life deliverance abides."

(Page 2).

> "So from beyond the Infinite, the Infinite comes ; and from the Infinite, the finite extends."

(Page 6).

> "The devout seeker is he who mingles in his heart the double currents of love and detachment,

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like the mingling of the streams of the Ganges and the Jumna" (Page 18).

"You have slept for unnumbered ages: this morning will you not awake?"

(Page 26).

"The truth-seeker's battle goes on day and night, as long as life lasts it never ceases."

(Page 45).

"The lock of error shuts the gate, open it with the key of love: Thus, by opening the door, thou shalt wake the Beloved."

(Page 45).

"O Man, if thou dost not know thine own Lord, whereof art thou so proud?"

(Page 64).

"The jewel is lost in the mud, and all are seeking for it;
Some look for it in the east, and some in the west; some in the water and some amongst stones.
But the servant Kabir has appraised it at its true value, and has wrapped it with care in the end of the mantle of his heart."

(Page 75).

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CHAPTER IX.

FICTION.

Some of the poet's best work is to be found in his short stories and novels and romances. But we must know and state at the very outset his limitations as a story-teller, though some extravagant admirers have gone the length of claiming him to be a great genius in the realm of creative fiction. The chief characteristics of the novel and the romance as a literary form is that interest of plot, incident, and character should be its chief aim and charm. The novel, however, differs from the romance in that the incidents in the former are probable and of normal occurrence while in the latter we have a certain degree of ideality of incident. In Tagore's novels even more than in his dramas we see that his approach to the heart of the subject is a poetic approach. He does not throw himself heart and soul into the characters and the scenery; the subjective, introspective, reflective side of his nature peeps out though in a form full of beauty and takes its place along with the characters; the atmosphere of the story and the drama becomes charged and electrical with poetic suggestion; the tendency to take the beauty or the pathos of each great situation as the central theme and to regard the incidents as accessories thereto leads to

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the simplification of the incidents, so that the artist may avoid any crowding of the canvas and prevent the details or the interest of the story drawing our gaze away from the overwhelming pathos or rapture of a psychological situation ; and the language too takes colour from the outlook and is full of a heavenly beauty of suggestiveness that draws our attention to the fact that more is meant than is said. Tagore being a poet to the inmost core of his being cannot but feel deeply the poetic aspect of every great situation in inner and outer life. We must not forget this circumstance when trying to estimate his achievement as a story-teller.

It follows from the above discussion that Tagore would naturally choose the short story as his favourite literary form in prose. It enables him to describe beautiful or happy or pathetic situations and moments in the lives of individuals without undue elaboration of incident or attention to interest of plot and character. The lyric mood is as brief as it is intense ; and one so liberally dowered as Tagore with it will hardly be able to bring to bear upon his creations that combination of epic and dramatic gifts and that objectivity of temperament without which the great masterpieces of fiction conceived and executed on a large scale can never be written.

It seems to me that Tagore's having chosen the short story as a literary form is in the main due to the fact

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that every Hindu is owing to tradition and environment a born story-teller. The fables of *Hitopadesa* and *Panchatantra* have travelled all over the world. The *Bhagavatha* movement by its popular appeal and by its method of *extempore* improvisation of stories helped to bring into existence a rare literary form in which directness of narration, emphasis on the universal elements and joys and sorrows of human nature, and a high tone of moral and religious fervour contribute to the beauty and power of the *Kathas*. The art of oral narration led also to the exclusion of all but the important incidents. The artist when he works with the pen in the secluded studio of the imagination can deal with the lives and characters of many characters ; each little rill of incident will flow into the mighty stream of the central story till at last the majestic river sweeps like the Ganges towards the close. But the oral narrator has his audience from him ; if he loses the threads of his narrative the spell would be broken ; an audience hearing a story will necessarily bestow less attention on it than a reader sitting at a book with his imagination alone by his side as his beloved spouse ; and the imperious need of arresting and keeping attention overrides all other considerations. On the other hand, he can play on the heart as a musician plays on the flute. He can intersperse his narration with apposite moral reflections and devotional songs ; there is the direct contact of soul and soul ; and the immediateness and direct-

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ness of the appeal gives him an immense advantage over the writer. He has as his aids the expressive language of the eyes, the manifestation of emotion by the mobile face, the various and limitless inflections of the human voice, and the varied grace of gestures. Indeed the whole human frame charged with the electricity of emotion is at his service. This advantage over cold print and distance more than counterbalances the few advantages that the writer of an elaborate story has in his favour. The modern developments of the art, however, at least in Southern India, shows a great deal of degradation ; vividness and naturalness of story telling are as conspicuous by their absenee as true devotional spirit ; while the introduction of mixed and composite musicial styles and of low farcial elements for the sake of pandering to the public taste has torn into shreds the few elements of dignity that decorated the art in the course of its long travel along the road of time.

Thus Tagore's short stories owe their peculiar charm to the special glories and limitations of his genius and to the special peculiarities of the Indian story-telling art. We must also bear in mind that Tagore has been a loving student of the best literatures of the West and that hence his art has acquired a new grace and power by such study, which has enabled him to take up life as it is around us and bring out its heights and depths before our eyes without that over-idealising tendency and obtrusion of the supernatural elements which were the

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chief defects of Indian fiction in the past. He is certainly not a realist, because the microscopic examination of the moral evils and material uglinesses of life that has of late blinded some of the greatest of the world's creative artists in the West to the elements of beauty, joy, and divinity in life and human nature is not possible to one who is essentially a poet and hence habitually dwells in a heaven of beauty, love, and joy. He takes the realities of life and shows their inner significance in the light of his soul. The supernatural element also comes into his stories almost naturally, because both the natural and supernatural realms own a common allegiance to the sway of imagination and claim and realise kinship when kneeling before the sovereign's throne.

It is thus clear that the chief charm of Tagore's short stories is the revelation of the hearts of men and women. The incidents in them are few and are chosen more for the light that they throw on human hearts than for keeping up the interest of the reader by wealth and variety of incident. Another beautiful trait in them is the frequency of beautiful natural descriptions. These are introduced not for their own sake but to show the common bond of sympathy that exists though unperceived between the soul of man and the soul of nature. Here again the poetic outlook on life is responsible for these wonderful literary effects. The stories reveal further how the poet's dower of imagination has enabled him to enter into the life of all

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classes of men and women in his land, and depict their daily tasks and joys and sorrows in a spirit of observant, large-hearted, divine sympathy. Everywhere the poet pleads for more sympathy, more love, more simplicity, a better ordering of life, a higher serenity, a sweeter submission to the divine will, and an increasing realisation of the divine foundations of life. Another characteristic of the stories is the living touch that they have with the new aspirations of united and national life that are surging through the heart of young India under the benign and uplifting sway of the British Crown. Last but not least must be mentioned the insight that he has into woman's heart. It has been well-said: "The man is the more variable phenomenon. . . . . . But the true woman is timeless, universal." The delineation of womanhood in Indian literature exposes the libel so often hurled by blind outsiders as well as blind critics within at the Hindus in regard to their alleged want of chivalry and reverence for womanhood. Mr. A. W. Ryder says about Kalidasa: "I know of no poet, unless it be Shakespeare, who has given the world a group of heroines so individual yet so universal, heroines as true, as tender, as brave as are Indumathi, Sita, Parvathi, the Yakha's bride, and Sakuntala" Tagore shows in many of his stories his realisation of the tenderness, love, and heroism of the Hindu wife, and his gallery of portraits of Indian womanhood is admirable for its truth and its charm. He describes womanhood in all the various

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phases and stages of its beauty, its fascination, its emotional refinement, its delight in self-sacrifice, and its divine rapture of love and tenderness. The little girl Minnie in the *Fruit-seller* who flits hither and thither like a gay butterfly basking in the sunshine of life and takes leave of us as a young bashful bride bright with the coming glow of love's moon though yet knowing not its radiant sweetness, just as the sky is beautifully bright with the coming glow of moonrise while the moon is yet behind the hill and unrevealed to our expectant eyes ; the little girl *Souravi*, who has chosen in her heart as her bridegroom the fickle Rasik who marries into a rich family for the sake of money ; the *Dumb Girl* who is treated tenderly by all and is in dumb converse with nature and all created beings though denied the power of speech ; the girl *Charushashi*, petted, playful, and wilful and yet full of an indefinable and irresistible charm ; the Hindu wife *Chandara* whom the joy of self-sacrifice sustains and gladdens though she belongs to a poor and uneducated family and has to lose her life by her confession made to screen her husband's brother who had committed a murder ; the Hindu wife *Bindhya Bhashini* who owns her husband's guilt to save him from dishonour and loves him as the idol of her heart though he returns from England a veritable snob with a foreigner as his wife ; the girl-widow in *A Study In Anatomy* who is carried away by irresistible passion to kill herself ; and the man that she loves

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the girl-widow *Kusum* who in a spirit of utter self control and self-sacrifice goes gladly to her death in the waters of the Ganges when the *Sanyasi* to whom she lost her pure heart unknown to him and even to herself asks her to forget him ; the matronly widow *Jaikali Devi*, who in spite of the stern austerity of her life, keeps her heart sweet by love of God and love of living creatures in distress, and goes through life passionless and pure :—these and other characters form a glorious group of heroines whose heroism in real—and in many cases in humble—life discloses to us the beauty and purity and loftiness of Tagore's conception of womanhood and his insight into the human heart.

I shall describe briefly a few of Tagore's short stories below.' *The Fruit-seller* describes the girl Minnie. The *Kabuli* Rahamat becomes her friend in spite of great disparity of age, as her sight brings into his memory the vision of his own young daughter in his far-off home. He is convicted for stabbing a man and when he comes out of prison he learns that it was Minnie's bridal-day. He desires to see her before he goes away. Her father objects but yields when Rahamat speaks of his little daughter and says that he grew to love Minnie out of remembrance of his own pretty child and shows the the imprint of his girl's tiny palm upon a piece of paper that he has been keeping next to his heart.

" I saw an imprint of a tiny palm upon the paper.

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It was not a photo, nor an oil-painting, but only a mark obtained by smearing the palm with some lamp-black. With this souvenir of his child nearest to his bosom does Rahamat come every year to sell fruits in the Calcutta streets—as if the soft touch of the child's tiny palm fills his great heart labouring under the pangs of separation and suffuses it with ambrosial nectar."

[Page 13 of Rajani Ranjan Sen's *Glimpses of Bengal Life* containing a translation of Tagore's stories.]

The second story describes how a schoolboy misses his mother's love when in his aunt's house. The third story called *A Resolve Accomplished* strikes a higher note and gives us a beautiful glimpse of heroism in humble life. Bansi, the elder brother of Rasik, foregoes the pleasures of married life and toils beyond his strength to place his brother in a position of comfort and have the lineage perpetuated through him. But Rasik flees away from the life of drudgery, marries into a rich family for the sake of money ignoring the girl *Souravi* who has been his playmate and has been looking up to him as her future lord, and finds on coming back that his brother had died leaving to him the money that he had put by for his dear brother's sake. Bansi was a weaver and the poet describes sympathetically how the weaver's art in India—where Dacca muslins have been described as woven of wind

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and in regard to whose perfection in the art of weaving James Mill said that 'of the exquisite degree of perfection to which the Hindus have carried the productions of the loom it would be idle to offer any description'—has been ruined by competition with the machine-made cloth imported from the West.

> "A pack of evil spirits, however, advanced from over the sea and hurled missiles of fire upon the inoffensive loom. They set the demon of hunger in the poor weaver's homes, and the whistling of steam sounded like frequent blasts from their horns of victory."

(Pages 27-28).

Tagore shows us how people praise others if these work for them and do not want payment but show no kindness if the question of payment comes in.

> "Upon going to work, he found that works done without remuneration carried favour and appreciation—which had ever been his own,—but that in the case of works of need there was no pity and no appreciation." (Pages 48–49).

We have to be grateful to Tagore for showing us how the modern industrial movement which consists of resolutions at conferences, is followed by no practical wisdom, and merely exhausts energies that could be used for good work and further retards progress by filling our hearts with a glow of self-satisfaction which is a poor substitute for the glow of self-sacrifice that must

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be there, shining in a steady flame like a sacred fire on an altar.

> "All went on well so long as its promoters sat in committee, but as soon as they came down to the field of actual work it became all confusion. From various countries they imported various kinds of looms and at last wove such a tangled mesh of worthless trash that committee after committee in their protracted sittings could not ascertain as to which pool of refuse the whole thing was to be thrown into."
>
> (Pages 52-53).

In the fourth story (*The Dumb Girl*) the poet describes how a dumb girl was given in marriage without her defect being disclosed and how the only tenderness that she knew came to her from Nature and from the mute love of her kine.

> "Subha had no language, but she had a pair of large dark eyes with long-drawn eye-lids, and her lips would tremble like tender leaves upon the slightest touch of emotion. . . . . But the large dark eyes have nothing to translate—the mind casts its spontaneous shadow upon them and impressions expand or contract therein of themselves." (Page 64).

> "She looked all round—could find no language, nor see those ever-familiar faces that understood the language of the dumb. An endless,

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> inexplicable wailing rang in the girl's ever-silent heart—none but One but who knew the heart could hear it." (Page 74).

There is something infinitely pathetic in this dumb agony of the human heart that is denied all possibility of self-expression. Pain is unavoidable so long as man has not risen to the supreme paradise of love of God ; and so long as he performs *punya* and *papa* (good acts and sinful acts) he must reap the inevitable harvest of his actions. The pity of it all becomes insupportably keen and oppressive when a simple, sweet, and lovable nature is denied the solace of pouring out its sorrows into sympathetic ears and receiving words of love, consolation, and encouragement from loving lips. Tagore has seized and expressed the pathetic situation with a poetic insight peculiarly his own.

The next story about the *Wandering Guest* has considerable poetic attractiveness. The boy *Tarapad* therein is quite as attractive a figure as Alastor could be expected to be if met with in ordinary life. His is a poetical nature that flits from joy to joy but would feel crushed by the load of ordinary life. He is brought up by a rich man whose wayward girl *Charu shashi* likes the boy and is of a lovable though imperious nature. The boy, however, is drowned in a flood and the poet suggests that that was the fittest close to the life of such a dear and free and joyful child of nature to whom the trammels of common life would have been

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an intolerable agony. The following description of the boy is very fine :

> "A fine boy he was, large-eyed and of fair complexion, and a delicate sweetness played about his pleasant smiling face and lips. The cloth he wore was not very clean. His bare frame was devoid of all manner of superfluities, as if some skilful artist had fashioned it with considerable care and rounded it off quite faultlessly. He looked as though he had been a hermit boy in his previous birth, and asceticism undefiled having considerably reduced the proportions of his body a chastened Brahmanic beauty had now been beaming all about him."
>
> (Pages 75-76).

The Look Auspicious is a story of considerable charm. Kanti Chunder came across a beautiful girl and sought her in marriage. The following description of the girl is full of delicate beauty :

> "That girl's beauty was extremely fresh, as if the Artificer of the world had let her off just after modelling her. It was hard to ascertain her age. Her body had developed but her face was so very immature that the least touch of worldliness was not perceptible there. The news of her stepping into the confines of youth did not seem to have yet reached herself."
>
> (Page 106).

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She was unfortunately deaf and dumb and insane, though the insanity was of a harmless type. Not knowing this and not knowing that she had a sister, he sought her father and asked him to give his girl in marriage. He did not want to see the girl as he thought that he had seen the girl whom the father was prepared to give to him in wedlock. During the marriage ceremony when the bridegroom and the bride have the first auspicious look at each other he found out the error. But he became reconciled to the change when he learnt the truth and when he realised how gentle and modest and good and fair his bride was. Tagore realises and expresses the supreme charm of the Hindu custom about the auspicious look in these beautiful words.

> "This really was the *look auspicious.* All obstructions tore away from before the eye of the mind hidden behind that of the flesh. All the brightness from the lamps as well as his heart now radiated and centred upon a single soft and gentle face. Kanti saw an amiable countenance and a chastened tranquil beauty suffusing that face."
>
> (Page 114).

The secret of the happiness of Hindu marriages from the time of the marriage of Rama and Sita is disclosed to us in these precious and beautiful words.

In *A Study in Anatomy* we have a description of how

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a girl-widow grew in beauty and loved Sashi Shekar and poisoned him and herself when she learnt how though loving her he resolved to marry another for the sake of money and social advancement. The following description by herself of her bloosomed beauty is very brightly written :

> " I could myself well understand that like glistening shoots of light from a piece of diamond when it is moved, the waves of my beauty would ripple all around at every movement of my frame in a variety of undulations as I walked. I would sometimes gaze upon the pair of my hands for long—such hands that could rein the mouths of the whole world's stubborn manhood and hold it in sweet subjection. When Subhadra bending proudly in her car of victory sped away with Arjuna through the three worlds plunged in wonder, perhaps she had a pair of such round not very plump arms and rosy palms and tapering fingers like flames of beauty."
>
> (Pages 119-120).

The story called *The Landing Stairway* is one of the finest of Tagore's stories and brings out the supreme beauty of his poetic endowments very well. Tagore has the rare power of realising and making us realise the psychical elements in seemingly inert matter. In this story a river-stair up and down whose steps millions of feet—hard, soft, proud, humble, clean, dirty,

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beautiful, ugly, pure, sinful,—had passed and which has felt the footfalls through the hastening centuries turns story-teller. The Ghat's reminiscences are narrated with imagination and insight.

> " The Ganges had been full—only four of my steps had been lying bare above the water. Land and water seemed to be locked in a loving embrace. . . . . The sunshine of the autumn morn lighting upon the full breast of the Ganges had taken the hue of molten gold or of the yellow *champaka* flower—at no other time of the year is this same colour of the sunbeams to be seen ! . . . . The light of my days and the shadow of my nights fall daily upon the Ganges and are daily wiped away again from her surface and they leave no mark anywhere. Thus it is that my heart is ever young though I look very old."

(Pages 129–131).

The Ghat then narrates the story of the young widow Kusum, who unknown to herself falls in love– a love that had no physical taint in it—with a young *Sanyasi* (ascetic), and at his bidding to forget him steps into the Ganges as into a bridal chamber and dies. The following description of the *Sanyasi* with his pure soul in communion with Nature in her solemn beauty is wonderful.

" When the hermit would at early dawn every day

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immerse in the water of the Ganges before sunrise, facing the morning star, and say his morning prayers in a calm solemn voice, I could then hardly hear the noise of the flowing stream. While listening to his voice, the sky towards the eastern bank would every day assume a ruddy hue, streaks of crimson would dye the fringes of the clouds, darkness would break and drop down on every side like the covering of the flower-bud about to bloom, and the red tint of the blooming Dawn would gradually come out in the celestial expanse. The tops of trees would by degrees manifest themselves against the sky, the wind would wake up, the colour of the sky would grow white, and at last from inside, from behind the line of trees, the sun would gently rise step by step in the heavens above cleansed after its morning bath. It would seem to me that as this saintly personage standing there in the water of the Ganges and looking towards the east uttered some potent incantations, at each word as it was uttered the spell of the night broke away, the moon and the stars sunk down in the west, the sun ascended the eastern sky, and the scenic outlook of the earth underwent a wondrous transformation! Who is this magician? When after his bath the ascetic would raise from out of the water his fair holy frame shining like a

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flame of the sacrificial fire, drops of water would then trickle out of his matted hair and the young sunlight reflect itself from all parts of his body." (Page 138).

I shall quote here only one more bit of heavenly description—now of an inner paradise as the quotation above was the description of an outer paradise.

"The shade of sadness that was upon her calm face passed away and she looked pure and holy like a consecrated flower bathed in dew—so much so that when she fell upon the hermit's feet with supreme veneration every morning, she looked like a flower dedicated to the worship of a god." (Page 142).

Mr. Rhys in his recent book well says: "In this story Rabindranath Tagore reveals the heart of Kusum by the slight interrogative touches which he often uses to give reality to his spiritual portraits of woman. He is one of the very few tale-tellers who can interpret women by intuitive art. The devotion and heroism of the Hinduism he paints are of a kind to explain to us that though the mortal rite of Sati is ended, the spirit that led to it is not at all extinct. It lives re-embodied in a thousand acts of sacrifice, and in many a delivering up of the creature-self, and its pride of life and womanly desire." Sir Edwin Arnold says beautifully in his *East and West*: "This was the basis of the heroic though tragical custom of 'Sati' or

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widow-burning, one of the grandest defiances ever flung by human faith and love at the face of the doctrine of annihilation."

I have already stated above what the story of *The Sentence* is about. It shows how in spite of the crudities, deadening drudgery, and unhappiness in the home of poverty there is a great deal of heroism in humble life in India, and how the divine elements in the souls of men and women shine forth even in a cottage and irradiate it with the beams of love and renunciation. In *The Expiation* the pure souled, meek, and gentle wife Bindhyabhashini takes the guilt of her husband on her head, though he rifles her father's iron safe and goes with the stolen money to England, is called to the bar, and comes out to India a worthless snob with a European wife. In *The Golden Mirage* we see described an unsympathetic wife who does not understand her dreamy husband and drives him to commit suicide to escape the slow torture of her want of sympathy. In *The Trespass* we have a sweet touch of nature that makes the whole world kin. An austere widow to whom her temple is everything in life allows a pig meant to be sacrificed elsewhere to find shelter in her *sanctum sanctorum* and rejoices in saving its life. Tagore says :

> "This little event pleased the great Lord of all living beings of the whole universe, but the little god of this small village named society became very much agitated." (Page 218).

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I wish to describe in greater detail the remarkable last story in the volume. It is entitled *The Hungry Stones*, and reveals a wonderful power of romance. A modern worldly man goes to dwell in a palace of marble where an emperor and his harem of beauties had lived and loved and died. He discovers every night ghost figures repeating their ancient tasks and loves and joys.

> "From the mouth of the fountain set in its bath jets of rose-scented water used to spirit upwards, and in this sequestered room, cooled by the perfumed spray, youthful Persian girls would rest upon the cold rocky seats decked with fine marble, and setting their tresses loose for ablution they would stretch their soft uncovered blossom-like feet in the limpid water of the reservoir and with *sitars* upon their knees sing the *gazal* songs of the vineyards." (Page 221).

An Iranian slave-girl, a fierce African-Eunuch, and other figures flit about as in real life. He cries aloud to the beautiful girl:

> "O Beauty celestial, in the lap of what-creature of the desert, on the bank of what cool fountain under the date-palms, did you take birth? What Bedouin robber tore you away from your mother's breast like a flower-bud from a wild creeper, and rode with you upon a steed of electric pace and cross the burning sandy expanse? . . . . The music of

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the *sarangi*, the clinking of the anklets, the gleam of the knife through the golden wine of Shiraz, the smarting poison, the smiting glance !"

(Page 235).

He then learns that *Meher Ali* who haunts the palace ruins crying "keep away, keep away ! all false, all false !" had become mad after living sometime in the palace and moving with the passionate, beautiful, and impulsive ghostly figures, and then leaves the palace for ever where he heard

"Voices sweet
Wooing him unto wild tempestuous lusts" (Stephen Phillips' *The New Inferno*), and felt as he would be whirled into a life of mad and tempestuous passion and sin.

I shall refer here to one other novel called *The Eyesore* translated recently in the pages of *The Modern Review* by Surendranath Tagore. There Tagore attempts a longer story than usual but the traits already pointed out are there just as in the short tales above said. Mahendra and Vihari are friends and more like brothers than friends. Mahendra marries Asha and lives happily with her. His mother Rajalakshmi and his aunt Annapurna are devoted to him. The imperious yet loving nature of Rajalakshmi and the sweet, submissive, and self-sacrificing nature of Annapurna are well delineated. Into this family comes Binodini whom Rajalakshmi had originally intended for Mahendra, who

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was married to some one else afterwards, and who became a widow. Asha loves her fondly and gives her the pet name of *Eyesore* in sport. But slowly Binodini displaces Asha in Mahendra's heart. She does so at first out of pleasure in the realisation of the power of her beauty. The girls, however, continue to be good friends as unsuspicious Asha has no idea of the coming tragedy. They arrange a picnic and are quite merry.

> "The artless merriment of the girls seemed to infect and gladden the rustling leaves and waving blossoms, the changing lights and shadows of the groves, and the rippling wavelets."

Vihari condemns Binodini's action and she slowly learns to love him and his noble nature. Mahendra finding his life and Binodini's life intolerable at home, goes away with her to another house, leaving Rajalaksmi and Asha to grieve and pine. But Binodini in her new-born pure love for Vihari has had a rebirth of the soul. Rajalakshmi now falls very ill and is on her death-bed. Her, death effects a reconciliation and a purification. Vihari offers to marry Binodini. But she upborne by a lofty spirit of renunciation refuses to drag him down by such a marriage, and goes with Annapurna to Benares to attain the joys of dispassion and devotion. I cannot help comparing the art of Tagore in this story which is a precious human document with that of R. C. Dutt in his *Lake of Palms*. Sudha in the latter is finely drawn but one cannot help feeling that

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the author has not learnt to subdue his reformer's zeal to his art. In Bankim Chunder Chatterjee and Tagore, the artist and student of the human heart sees life steadily and sees it whole and makes us realise the glory and the pathos of human life. Bankim Chunder is a great novelist of genius ; Tagore, though his greatest work is not in fiction, and is not as great a novelist as Bankim Chunder, has vitalised the short story by breathing into it the divine breath of poetry and given us "a thing of beauty which is a joy for ever."

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CHAPTER X.

SADHANA.

I have taken up *Sadhana* last as it is a noble and beautiful summing up of Tagore's profoundest ideas on life here and hereafter, and as all his other works lead up to it. All other works of his seem to be like beautiful individual notes while the *Sadhana* is like the sweet tune running through them all. In all other works the lyric genius, the dramatic talent, and the story-telling skill seem to be like so many prisms resolving the white light of the poet's soul into a beautiful symphony of colours, while in the *Sadhana* we have the white light in its calm noonday radiance. Even here the all-pervasive lyric mood is present like the all-embracing infinite blue sky, but even that mood is lit up and irradiated by the white light of the soul even as the sky looks bluer and more radiant in the enveloping white light of the day.

The *Sadhana* consists of lectures delivered in America and again in England. Those who had the privilege of hearing them speak of the wonderful spell exercised by Tagore on his hearers, and say that much of the force and the charm of the addresses is lost in the book. The book even in its present form is a precious spiritual document to which we must turn again and again for consolation, inspiration, and illumination.

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Tagore says in his preface that what he has attempted is not a philosophical treatment but to bring his readers "into touch with the ancient spirit of India as revealed in our sacred texts and manifested in the life of to-day." He further points out that "all the great utterances of man have to be judged not by the letter but by the spirit—the spirit which unfolds itself with the growth of life in history." He says further: "The meaning of the living words that come out of the experiences of great hearts can never be exhausted by any one system of logical interpretation. They have to be endlessly explained by the commentaries of individual lives, and they gain an added mystery in each new revelation."

In the *Sadhana* we find the most fundamental ideas, aspirations, and joys of the Indian mind. I have already shown in the introductory chapter that Tagore has the most perfect insight into the Indian ideals of life and art, and is a perfect embodiment of the Indian type of culture. In the *Sadhana* we find revealed to us the deepest and innermost ideas of one who is a poet as well as a saint—who has seen and heard and enjoyed the panorama of life and the music of things and at the same time has seen in the heart the supernal beauty of the face of God.

I shall try to give here some of the deepest and most beautiful ideas in the book, leaving the reader to study the book for himself fully and lovingly because every

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sentence in it is precious and valuable and the book is a veritable mine of spiritual gold.

At the very beginning of the book and throughout the work we find Tagore emphasising the difference between the Indian outlook on life and the Western outlook on life.

> "Civilisation is a kind of mould that each nation is busy making for itself to shape its men and women according to its best ideal. All its institutions, its legislature, its standard of approbation and condemnation, its conscious and unconscious teachings tend towards that object. The modern civilisation of the West, by all its organised efforts, is trying to turn out men perfect in physical, intellectual, and moral efficiency. There the vast energies of the nations are employed in extending man's power over his surroundings, and people are combining and straining every faculty to possess and to turn to account all that they can lay their hands upon, to overcome every obstacle on their path of conquest. They are ever disciplining themselves to fight nature and other races, their armaments are getting more and more stupendous every day; their machines, their appliances, their organisations go on multiplying at an amazing rate. This is a splendid achievement, no doubt, and a wonderful manifestation of man's masterfulness

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> which knows no obstacle, and which has for its object the supremacy of himself over everything else. The ancient civilisation of India had its own ideal of perfection towards which its efforts were directed. . . . . Yet, this also was a sublime achievement,—it was a supreme manifestation of that human aspiration which knows no limit and which has for its object nothing less than the realisation of the Infinite."
>
> (Pages 13-14).

We can well see how Tagore's ideas on this matter are in agreement with those of another great son of India in modern times—Swami Vivekananda. Tagore is thankful that both the great types have been in existence for the better growth of man and the greater glory of God. He recognises how each type possesses also the defects of its virtues. In the West the soul of man is ceaselessly extending outwards and finds no rest or peace or rapture because of its partial vision. In India when India was most truly herself there was perfect vision but in mediæval and modern India there was and is a tendency to ignore " the claims of action in the external universe " (see pages 125-127). Tagore pleads for the recognition of man as spirit who has at the same time to climb to Godhead through right action, right knowledge, and love. He points out how man loses his true value where cannibalism prevails, and by elaborating that idea in an original and striking way, he makes us realise

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that to the extent to which we lower the value of man and degrade his true nature and dignity, we are all cannibals. No more scathing condemnation of this cheapening of the soul which prevails in the West and is now beginning to prevail here also can be had than that which occurs in the following passage :

> "In countries higher in the scale of civilisation we find sometimes man looked upon as a mere body, and he is bought and sold by the price of his flesh only. And sometimes he gets his sole value from being useful; he is made into a machine, and is traded upon by the man of money to acquire for him more money. Thus our lust, our greed, our love of comfort result in cheapening man to his lowest value. . . . . . . It produces ugly sores in the body of civilisation, gives rise to its hovels and brothels, its vindictive penal codes, its cruel prison systems, its organised method of exploiting foreign races to the extent of permanently injuring them by depriving them of the discipline of self-government and means of self-defence." (Pages 108-109).

How true this is, is well borne out by the following passage in B. Alderson's *Andrew Carnegie.*

> "The American employer looks upon his work-people as being literally hands; he cares little about their bodies, and still less about their souls."

Mr. Carnegie himself says :

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> "I remember how after Vandy and I had gone round the world, and were walking the streets of Pittsburg, we decided that the Americans were the saddest-looking race we had ever seen. Life is so terribly earnest here. Ambition urges all on, from him who handles a spade to him who employs thousands. We know no rest."

J. S. Mill says:

> "It is questionable whether all the labour-saving machinery has yet lightened the day's labour of a single human being."

Hence it is that Tagore points out:

> "Civilisation can never sustain itself upon cannibalism of any form. For that by which alone man is true can only be nourished by love and justice. (Page 112).

Tagore points out further wherein lies the speciality of the Indian type of culture and civilisation.

> "The practice of realising and affirming the presence of the infinite in all things has been its constant inspiration." (Page 66).

The Indian sages "greeted the world with the glad recognition of kindred." Tagore tries to analyse what this was due to. He points out that while in the West civilisation was born in cities where each man put a wall between himself and his neighbour and a roof between him and the overarching sky, in India it was born in the bosom of nature,—in forests. "To realise this

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great harmony between man's spirit and the spirit of the world was the endeavour of the forest-dwelling sages of ancient India." (Page 4).

"The West seems to take a pride in thinking that it is subduing nature; as if we are living in a hostile world where we have to wrest everything we want from an unwilling and alien arrangement of things. This sentiment is the product of the city-wall habit and training of mind. For in the city life man naturally directs the concentrated light of his mental vision upon his own life and works, and this creates an artificial dissociation between himself and the universal nature within whose bosom he lies." (Page 5).

"But in India the point of view was different; it included the world with the man as one great truth. India put all her emphasis on the harmony that exists between the individual and the universal . . . . . . With meditation and service, with a regulation of her life, she cultivated her consciousness in such a way that everything had a spiritual meaning to her." (Pages 5-7).

Tagore then proceeds to explain the Indian idea of places of pilgrimage and of absention from animal food.

"Therefore India chose her places of pilgrimage wherever there was in nature some special grandeur or beauty, so that her mind could come out of its world of narrow necessities and realise its

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place in the infinite. This was the reason why in India a whole people who once were meat-eaters gave up taking animal food to cultivate the sentiment of universal sympathy for life, an event unique in the history of mankind."

(Page 9).

He ridicules and exposes the untruth of the idea that this realisation of the infinite meant the annihilation of the self.

"In the typical thought of India it is held that the true deliverance of man is the deliverance from *avidya*, from ignorance. It is not in destroying anything that is positive and real, for that cannot be possible, but that which is negative, which obstructs our vision of truth. When this obstruction, which is ignorance, is removed, then only is the eyelid drawn up which is no loss to the eye." (Page 72).

I shall now deal with the chief spiritual ideas of Tagore in the book and then deal with a few practical applications of them by him to life and art. He points out that the mystery of life has been in no way lessened by the work of science :

"Curiously enough, there are men who lose that feeling of mystery, which is at the root of all delights, when they discover the uniformity of law among the diversity of nature. As if gravitation is not more of a mystery than the fall of an

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apple, as if the evolution from one scale of being to the other is not something which is even more shy of explanation than a succession of creations. The trouble is that we very often stop at such a law as if it were the final end of our search, and then we find that it does not even begin to emancipate our spirit. It only gives satisfaction to our intellect, and as it does not appeal to our whole being it only deadens in us the sense of the infinite." (Pages 97-98).

The eternal though ever-changing universe is full of mystery :

"The play of life and death we see everywhere—this transmutation of the old into the new. The day comes to us every morning, naked and white, fresh as a flower. But we know it is old. It is age itself. It is that very ancient day which took up the new-born earth in its arms, covered it with its white mantle of light, and sent it forth on its pilgrimage among the stars. Yet its feet are untired and its eyes undimmed. It carries the golden amulet of ageless eternity, at whose touch all wrinkles vanish from the forehead of creation. In the very core of the world's heart stands immortal youth. Death and decay cast over its face momentary shadows and passion; they leave no marks of their steps—and truth remains fresh and young." (Page 88).

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The highest joy and duty of man is the realisation of his oneness with the infinite. This perception of the soul by the soul may not lead to power but leads to joy.

> "Thus the text of our every-day meditation is the *Gayatri*, a verse which is considered to be the epitome of all the Vedas. By its help we try to realise the essential unity of the world with the conscious soul of man ; we learn to perceive the unity held together by the one Eternal Spirit, whose power creates the earth, the sky, and the stars, and at the same time irradiates our minds with the light of a consciousness that moves and exists in unbroken continuity with the outer world." (Page 9).

> "For a man who has realised his soul there is a determinate centre of the universe around which all else can find its proper place, and from thence only can he draw and enjoy the blessedness of a harmonious life." (Page 34).

It is only then that the inner chaos is resolved into a beautiful cosmos with God as its sovereign, its vivifying force, and its ultimate meaning.

> "But when we find our centre in our soul by the power of self-restraint, by the force that harmonises all warring elements and unifies those that are apart, then all our isolated impressions reduce themselves to wisdom, and all our momen-

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tary impulses of heart find their completion in love; then all the petty details of our life reveal an infinite purpose, and all our thoughts and deeds unite themselves inseparably in an internal harmony."

(Page 35).

I shall quote one other passage here as this idea is the grand central idea which has inspired all other ideas of Tagore about life and art:

"We seem to watch the Master in the very act of creation of a new world when a man's soul draws her heavy curtain of self aside, when her veil is lifted and she is face to face with her eternal lover.

But what is this state? It is like a morning of spring, varied in its life and beauty, yet one and entire. When a man's life rescued from distractions finds its unity in the soul, then the consciousness of the infinite becomes at once direct and natural to it as the light is to the flame. All the conflicts and contradictions of life are reconciled; knowledge, love, and action are harmonized; pleasure and pain become one in beauty, enjoyment and renunciation equal in goodness; the breach between the finite and the infinite fills with love and overflows; every moment carries its message of the eternal; the formless appears to us in the form of the flower, of the

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fruit; the boundless takes us up in his arms as a father and walks by our side as a friend."

(Page 43).

It follows from this central idea that just as we have our physical body, so we have our social body and our universal body. "The emancipation of our physical nature is in attaining health, of our social being in attaining goodness, and of our self in attaining love."

(Page 83).

Tagore shows us also how man's impulse to realise the laws of the universe, his search for system, is really a search for unity, for synthesis, for the Infinite.

His views as to *Avidya* (ignorance) and sin are a logical outcome of his great central idea and are full of convincing wisdom and golden beauty. *Avidya* is but man's spiritual sleep, the non-realisation of his oneness and harmony with the Infinite. "*Avidya* is the ignorance that darkens our consciousness, and tends to limit it within the boundaries of the personal self." (Page 32). Sin is only the same defect from another point of view. Ignorance, viewed in its moral aspect, is sin. "For in sin man takes part with the finite against the infinite that is in him. It is the defeat of his soul by his self. . . . . . In sin we lust after pleasures, not because they are truly desirable, but because the red light of our passion makes them appear desirable."

(Pages 38-39).

From the same central idea follows also the truth of

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the supreme freedom of consciousness and its attainment of its goal by achieving union with God by service, knowledge, and love,—which is preached by Sri Krishna in the *Gita* and has been taught to us by all our great spiritual teachers.

> "This is the noble heritage from our forefathers waiting to be claimed by us as our own, this ideal of the supreme freedom of consciousness. It is not merely intellectual or emotional, it has an ethical basis, and it must be translated into action. In the Upanishad, it is said, *The Supreme Being is all-pervading, therefore* he is the innate good in all. (सर्वव्यापी स भगवान् तस्मात् सर्वगत : शिव :). To be truly united in knowledge, love, and service with all beings, and thus to realise one's self in the all-pervading God is the essence of goodness, and this is the keynote of the teachings of the Upanishads." (Pages 21-22).

Tagore has done a great service in emphasising the need for right action to emancipate the soul from the tyranny of self, though I cannot agree with those who in their ignorance of the deepest ideas of Tagore and the fundamental truths of our scriptures assert that Tagore proclaimed action as the goal of life. He says: "As joy expresses itself in law, so the soul finds its freedom in action." Freedom *in* action, and not freedom *from* action, is the goal. This is the *Gita* ideal of *Nish-*

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kama Karma in another form. "This is the *Karmayoga* of the *Gita*, the way to become one with the infinite activity by the exercise of the activity of disinterested goodness." (Page 58).

Tagore says again :

> "When man cuts down the pestilential jungle and makes unto himself a garden, the beauty that he thus sets free from its enclosure of ugliness is the beauty of his own soul. Without giving it this freedom outside, he cannot make it free within. When he implants law and order in the midst of the waywardness of society, the good which he sets free from the obstruction of the bad is the goodness of his own soul : without being thus made free outside it cannot find freedom within." (Page 121).

> "As for ourselves, it is only when we wholly submit to the bonds of truth, that we fully gain the joy of freedom. And how ? As does the string that is bound to the harp. When the harp is truly strung, when there is not the slightest laxity in the strength of the bond, then only does music result ; and the string transcending itself in its melody finds at every chord its true freedom." (Page 128).

While admiring this gospel of self-consecration by action, I cannot but think that Tagore has erred by over-statement in his appeal to the *Sanyasin* as a man

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running away from the world. (Pages 129-130). Our sages declare that every man must begin his spiritual progress by service of humanity ; that the attainment of illumination by renunciation, knowledge, and love is an end in itself ; and that even after illumination the wise man should do his duties in a spirit of detachment and dispassion so that others might not be led astray by the wise men giving up the performance of duties. They declare further that in the case of the very few who have risen to the highest raptures of love and wisdom and are immersed in bliss no worldly action can be expected. What action do the votaries of the gospel of work ask them to do ? If they pass through a place they spread a paradise of love about them, and whoever is fortunate enough to breathe for a moment in the divine and luminous atmosphere that they carry about them feels a sudden conversion of the heart. A compassionate glance from their eyes is worth a thousand religious lectures. How few, how very few, can be such souls ? In the case of those who are only travellers on the path towards the light performance of duties is exacted by the sacred law, though they will do their duties in a spirit of detachment and dispassion and as an act of worship of the Lord saying and feeling *Sri Krishnarpanam asthu* (श्रीकृष्णार्पणं अस्तु)— I dedicate it to Sri Krishna. Through law the soul rises to wisdom and love, and through wisdom and love it rises to the Bliss of the Lord.

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Tagore lays emphasis again and again on the gospel of love above referred to. He says : "Essentially man is not a slave either of himself or of the world ; but he is a lover. His freedom and fulfilment is in love, which is another name for perfect comprehension."

(Page 15).

What is this love? It is the joyous attainment and realisation of a larger self. "Our soul can realise itself truly only by denying itself." (Page 19).

The object of love is recognised as our own soul. Tagore thus explains the meaning of a famous passage in the Upanishads :

नवा अरे पुत्रस्य कामाय पुत्रः प्रियो भवति ।
आत्मनस्तु कामाय पुत्रः प्रियो भवति ॥

"The meaning of this is, that whomsoever we love, in him we find our own soul in the highest sense. The final truth of our existence lies in this. *Paramatma*, the supreme soul, is in me, as well as in my son, and my joy in my son is the realisation of this truth. It has become quite a commonplace fact, yet it is wonderful to think upon, that the joys and sorrows of our loved ones are joys and sorrows to us—nay, they are more. Why so? Because in them we have grown larger, in them we have touched that great truth which comprehends the whole universe."

(Page 29).

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> "Therefore is love the highest bliss that man can attain to, for through it alone he truly knows that he is more than himself, and that he is at one with the All." (Page 28).

What is the nature of love? Swami Vivekananda says: "The first test of love is that it knows no bargaining; it always gives. Love takes on itself the stand of a giver, and never that of a taker." Tagore says: "Love spontaneously gives itself in endless gifts." (Page 107). He points out again: "Working for love is freedom in action. This is the meaning of the teaching of disinterested work in the *Gita*." (Page 78).

We can now realise Tagore's great ideas about God, Nature, and Man. Nature is God expressed and manifested as Law. In man we have a spark of the divine; and he can rise to the raptures of union with God through love.

> "If God assumes his role of omnipotence, then his creation is at an end and his power loses all its meaning. For power to be a power must act within limits. God's water must be water, his earth can never be other than earth. The law that has made them earth and water is his own law by which he has separated the play from the player, for therein the joy of the player consists.
>
> As by the limits of law nature is separated from God, so it is the limits of its egoism which separates the self from Him. . . . . . . Our

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life, like a river, strikes its banks not to find itself closed in by them, but to realise anew every moment that it has its unending opening towards the sea. It is as a poem that strikes its metre at every step not to be silenced by its rigid regulations, but to give expression every moment to the inner freedom of its harmony."

(Pages 86-90).

Thus creation is law as well as love.

" Waves rise, each to its individual height, in a seeming attitude of unrelenting competition, but only up to a certain point; and thus we know of the great repose of the sea to which they are all related, and to which they must all return in a rhythm which is marvellously beautiful.

In fact, these undulations and vibrations, these risings and fallings, are not due to the erratic contortions of disparate bodies, they are a rhythmic dance. Rhythm can never be born of the haphazard struggle of combat. Its underlying principle must be unity, not opposition."

(Pages 96-97).

We now come to the consummation of life as understood and taught by Tagore. All the abovesaid ideas lead up to this great idea. Attaining God and union with Him are the consummation of the life of the soul.

" It is the end of our self to seek that union. It must bend its head low in love and meekness and take

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its stand where great and small all meet. It has to gain by its loss and rise by its surrender. His games would be a horror to the child if he could not come back to his mother, and our pride of personality will be a curse to us if we cannot give it up in love. We must know that it is only the revelation of the Infinite which is endlessly new and eternally beautiful in us, and which gives the only meaning to our self."

(Page 91).

"So our daily worship of God is not really the process of gradual acquisition of Him, but the daily process of surrendering ourselves, removing all obstacles to union and extending our consciousness of Him in devotion and service, in goodness and in love." (Page 149).

The above are the leading spiritual ideas in *Sadhana*. I shall refer now very briefly to his solution of some great spiritual problems that have been agitating the mind of man from the dawn of time. His treatment of the problem of the freedom of the will is original and convincing.

"Therefore, it is the self of man which the great king of the universe has not shadowed with his throne—he has left it free. In his physical and mental organism, where man is related with nature, he has to acknowledge the rule of king, but in his self he is free to disown him. There

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our God must win his entrance. There he comes as a guest, not as a king, and therefore he has to wait till he is invited. It is the man's self from which God has withdrawn his commands, for there he comes to court our love. His armed force, the laws of nature, stand outside its gate, and only beauty, the messenger of his will, finds admission within its precincts."

(Page 41).

He says again :

"Our will has freedom in order that it may find out that its true course is towards goodness and love. For goodness and love are infinite, and only in the infinite is the perfect realisation of freedom possible."

(Page 84).

One of the discourses is devoted to the problem of evil. Tagore points out that pain is not an end in itself like joy ; that it is negative and hence transient ; and that through the discipline of death and pain we rise to the heaven of immortality and bliss. Of course this does not explain why pain originated in the universe. It may be argued that God could discipline the soul through happiness to bliss. Indeed, the only rational explanation of the problem of evil is to be found in the Hindu theory of *Karma*. But Tagore's views are quite true and beautiful so far as they go. He says :

"When science collects facts to illustrate the

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struggle for existence that is going on in the kingdom of life, it raises a picture in our minds of 'nature red in tooth and claw.' But in these mental pictures we give a fixity to colours and forms which are really evanescent. It is like calculating the weight of the air on each square inch of our body to prove that it must be crushingly heavy for us. With every weight, however, there is an adjustment, and we lightly bear our burden. With the struggle for existence in nature there is reciprocity. There is the love for children and for comrades; there is the sacrifice of self, which springs from love; and this love is the positive element in life." (Pages 49-50).

Tagore says of death:

"But the truth is, death is not the ultimate reality. It looks black, as the sky looks blue; but it does not blacken existence, just as the sky does not leave its stain on the wings of the bird."

(Page 50).

He decries pessimism as an unreal and erroneous mood.

"Pessimism is a form of mental dipsomania, it disdains healthy nourishment, indulges in the strong drink of denunciation, and creates an artificial dejection which thirsts for a stronger draught."

(Page 53).

What is good, then, as opposed to evil? "Good is

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that which is desirable for our greater self." (Page 54). Animals are unmoral whereas man can be immoral or moral.

> "To the man who lives for an idea, for his country, for the good of humanity, life has an extensive meaning, and to that extent pain becomes less important to him." (Page 56).

Tagore then takes up the problem of self—a problem which is hard to solve because here the mind has to work on itself. Tagore is a believer in the creed that the human personality is distinct and separate though it must realise and merge in the infinite. Here we must wade through metaphysical depths and I forbear to do so because this is hardly the occasion for that task. Whether the ego reaches its consummation by merging itself in the All or whether it does so by maintaining its separateness and communing with the Infinite through love is a problem which cannot be settled by us who are in the position of men who standing at the base of the Himalayas debate which is their topmost peak. Tagore says:

> "It is our joy of the infinite in us that gives our joy in ourselves." (Page 70).

The attainment of the infinite by the self is pictured by Tagore in many ways with true poetic vision. It is like the lamp surrendering its oil to light the flame, like "the tree's surrender of the ripe fruit," like the river

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that moves, never hasting, never resting, to meet and mingle with the Infinite Ocean.

I shall now deal briefly with Tagore's ideas on the message and meaning of nature and art. They flow naturally out of his central ideas as to the truth of things. One great truth that he has given us is that though nature is full of activity and strife without, yet she is all silence and peace within, and that the beauty of nature, though it has an active aspect and is ever undergoing transformation, becomes a messenger of peace and joy to the human heart in which the elements of love and joy in nature remain beautiful and changeless for all time.

> 'The colour and smell of the flower are all for some purpose therefore; no sooner is it fertilized by the bee, and the time of its fruition arrives, than it sheds its exquisite petals and a cruel economy compels it to give up its sweet perfume. It has no time to flaunt its finery, for it is busy beyond measure . . . . But when this same flower enters the hearts of men, its aspect of busy practicability is gone and it becomes the very emblem of leisure and repose . . . . A flower, therefore, has not its only function in nature, but has another great function to exercise in the mind of man. . . . . They bring a love-letter to the heart written in many-coloured inks. . . . . Outwardly nature is busy and

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restless, inwardly she is all silence and peace. . . . . . You see her bondage only when you see her from without, but within her heart is a limitless beauty."

(Pages 99, 100, 101, 103).

Similarly art is outwardly imitative of the world of man and the world of nature but her soul is beauty, love, peace, and joy. The artist objectifies his idea to realise its beauty and its elements of love, joy and peace.

"The artist who has a joy in the fullness of his artistic idea objectifies it and thus gains it more fully by holding it afar. It is joy which detaches ourselves from us, and then gives it form in creations of love in order to make it more perfectly our own. Hence there must be this separation, not a separation of repulsion but a separation of love."

(Page 79).

Art is the expression of the joy of the soul, just as creation is the expression of the joy and love of God.

आननदद्‌येव खल्विमानि भूतानिजायन्ते, आनन्दे न जातानि जीवन्ति आनन्दं प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति ।

(From joy does spring all this creation, by joy is it maintained, towards joy does it progress, and into joy does it enter). Tagore says :

"It is the nature of this abounding joy to realise itself in form which is law. The joy, which is

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without form, must create, must translate itself into forms. The joy of the singer is expressed in the form of a song, that of the poet in the form of a poem. Man in his role of a creator is ever creating forms, and they come out of his abounding joy."

(Page 104).

" A thing is only completely our own when it is a thing of joy to us." (Page 137).

If we contemplate things for a time we realise how what is merely useful comes into merely temporary relation to us and vanishes out of the fields of memory; but beauty and joy are infinite and immortal; and the few moments when we have had a vision of true beauty and enjoyed true rapture shine out as stars in the sky of the soul. Beauty is omnipresent like joy; and ugliness results when we set our self against the Infinite.

" In the same manner there is ugliness in the distorted expression of beauty in our life and in our art which comes from our imperfect realisation of Truth."

(Pages 140–141).

Hence we can now realise what is false æsthetics and what is true æsthetics. The attempt to see beauty only in what is remote, infrequent, or unusual is wrong.

" In some stage of our growth, in some period of our history, we try to set up a special cult of

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> beauty, and pare it down to a narrow circuit, so as to make it a matter of pride for a chosen few." (Page 139).

The æsthetic emancipation comes when we free ourselves from such narrowness of vision, when we see the unperceived joy and loveliness in even common things, "when the apparent discords are resolved into modulations of rhythm." (Page 139). We then realise the rapture, repose, and radiance that are omnipresent in nature and in humanity, and become true artists, and are filled with joy, peace, love, and beauty.

Hence work must be the outcome of love and joy if it is to be of permanent value and beneficence; and the artist, while expressing love and joy, must obey the laws of art because joy expresses itself in law and finds full freedom in such expression.

> "The beauty of a poem is bound by strict laws, yet it transcends them. The laws are its wings, they do not keep it weighed down, they carry it to freedom. Its form is in law but its spirit is in beauty. Law is the first step towards freedom, and beauty is the complete liberation which stands on the pedestal of law. Beauty harmonises in itself the limit and the beyond, the law and the liberty." (Pages 98, 99).

Similarly in the world-poem also we have to rise to the perception of law and then to rise yet higher into the realisation of love and joy.

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"In the world-poem, the discovery of the law of its rhythms, the measurement of its expansion and contraction, movement and pause, the pursuit of its evolution of forms and characters, are true achievements of the mind; but we cannot stop there. It is like a railway station; but the station platform is not our home. Only he has attained the final truth who knows that the whole world is a creation of joy." (Page 99).

The poet must share his joy with all.

"A poet is a true poet when he can make his personal idea joyful to all men, which he could not do if he had not a medium common to all his audience. This common language has its own law which the poet must discover and follow, by doing which he becomes true and attains poetical immortality." (Page 60).

Tagore then shows how music is the purest form of art.

"Music is the purest form of art, and therefore the most direct expression of beauty, with a form and spirit which is one and simple, and least encumbered with anything extraneous. . . . Therefore the true poets, they who are seers seek to express the universe in terms of music. . . . . What is more, music and the musician are inseparable. When the singer departs, his singing dies with him; it is in eternal union with

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the life and joy of the master. This world-song is never for a moment separated from its singer. It is not fashioned from any outward material. It is his joy itself taking never-ending form."

(Pages 141 to 143).

I have dealt with Tagore's application of his great central ideas to art. I shall now say a few words about his application of them to life. He shows that the attainment of our true nature by self-sacrifice and love is the fulfilment of life—a precious truth which, if it is the "master-light of our being," will lead us to the lotus feet of God.

"Our revelatory men have always been those who have lived the life of self-sacrifice. The higher nature in man always seeks for something which transcends itself and yet is its deepest truth; which claims all its sacrifice, yet makes this sacrifice its own recompense. This is man's *Dharma*, man's religion, and man's self is the vessel which is to carry this sacrifice to the altar."

(Pages 75-76).

Life becomes a failure and tragedy when we try to raise our fleeting possessions to the dignity and sacredness of God-head.

"Our physical pleasures leave no margin for the unrealised. . . . . . In all our intellectual pleasures, the margin is broader, the limit is far off . . . . . . The tragedy of human life

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consists in our vain attempts to stretch the limits of things which can never become unlimited—to reach the Infinite by absurdly adding to the rungs of the ladder of the finite."

(Pages 150-151).

Hence love and renunciation are the deepest truths of the soul, and it is through love and service that we attain the lotus feet of God.

" We see everywhere in the history of man that the spirit of renunciation is the deepest reality of the human soul. . . . . . . Man's abiding happiness is not in getting anything but in giving himself up to what is greater than himself, to ideas which are larger than his individual life, the idea of his country, of humanity, of God."

(Pages 151-152).

I shall conclude this study reverently by quoting the following devotional gem:—

" O giver of thyself ! at the vision of thee as joy let our souls flame up to thee as the fire, flow on to thee as the river, permeate thy being as the fragrance of the flower. Give us strength to love, to love fully, our life in its joys and sorrows, in its gains and losses, in its rise and fall. Let us have strength enough fully to see and hear thy universe, and to work with full vigour therein. Let us fully live the life thou hast given us, let us bravely take

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and bravely give. This is our prayer to thee. Let us once for all dislodge from our minds the feeble fancy that would make out thy joy to be a thing apart from action, thin, formless, and unsustained. Wherever the peasant tills the hard earth, there does thy joy gush out in the green of the corn, wherever man places the entangled forest, smooths the stony ground, and clears for himself a homestead, there does thy joy enfold it in orderliness and peace.

O worker of the universe ! We would pray to thee to let the irresistible current of thy universal energy come like the impetuous south wind of spring, let it come rushing over the vast field of the life of man, let it bring the scent of many flowers, the murmurings of many woodlands, let it make sweet and vocal the lifelessness of our dried-up soul-life. Let our newly awakened powers cry out for unlimited fulfilment in leaf and flower and fruit."

(Pages 133-134).

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CHAPTER XI.

TAGORE'S MISCELLANEOUS WRITINGS AND SPEECHES.

I. Introductory.

Some of Tagore's most valuable work is yet untranslated. As Mr. Rhys says: "The copy of his collected poems—a curious, attractive-looking large quarto, bound in plain crimson boards without adornment, printed with the cursive Bengali type in double columns, and published at Calcutta—serves as a very tantalising reminder of the amount of his verse that is still untranslated. It must in all contain about ten times as much matter as we have in the present English books, of which *The Gardener* is first in order of time." The Rev. Mr. C. F. Andrews wrote to me in a letter: "He has also written sermons called 'Shantiniketan' containing some of his most beautiful thoughts." My present ignorance of the Bengali language prevents me from reading all the poet's untranslated works. One of the gentlemen in Bengal to whom I wrote for information about them advised me to read Bengali and confined his information to that advice. I had already made up my mind to read Bengali for reading Tagore in the original if for nothing else. Another

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Bengali gentleman to whom I applied for information about the poet's untranslated works and for personal impressions of Tagore the man, referred me to Mr. Rhys's recent book. The main portion of my work had been written before Mr. Rhys's book appeared, and my correspondent's view that first-hand information about the poet's ways and views and his untranslated works could be had by me from a book by a distant English admirer is certainly remarkable for its originality. I have resolved to learn the beautiful Bengali language and hence shall before long be able to enter into the heaven of Tagore's art by the royal road of the language in which his work is enshrined for ever.

I shall in this chapter refer to such of his miscellaneous songs, poems, essays and other prose writings, lectures, and letters as are available to the general public in English. It is gratifying to note that many of them have been translated and published in The *Modern Review* and elsewhere, though the task of collecting them and bringing them together has been a difficult one. I do not pretend to have achieved any degree of completeness in performing this task, and can only hope to perform it in a manner worthy of it on a future occasion. I shall also deal with the form and substance of Tagore's untranslated works as far as I have been able to get satisfactory information about them, leaving this task also to be done in a fitting manner on a subsequent occasion.

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II. Tagore's Miscellaneous Songs.

Though Tagore is not an expert musician, he has an instinct and genius for absolute music, and he is a musician by the royal prerogative of the heavenly harmony of his inner nature. His songs have stirred Bengal profoundly by their love of motherland and love of God, and have become a unique and great national asset. The highest homage is paid to a poet or musician when his poems or songs become a part of the inner wealth of all the people of his land and not merely the proud possession of a small and exclusive literary coterie. In India we have had many great geniuses whose very names are unknown and whose wonderful conquests in the realm of Beauty have become a national possession. The great merits of Tagore's music are their popular appeal, their patriotism, their instinct for beauty, and their devotional rapture. Tagore's songs have a unique combination of melody and message and are faithful to the highest Hindu ideals of music. The basis of Indian music is the *Raga* which may be described as a melody-mould, the informing soul of the song which determines the particular type of beauty that the song is to have as its dower. Improvisation for expressing what is called *Manodharma* (musical imagination) is allowed within the limits of the *Raga*. The words are set to music, and not music to words. These are the main points of difference between European and Indian

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music, because while Indian music has the abovesaid unique and beautiful traits, the music of Europe has not got them. *Rasa* is the soul of all art according to Hindu artists, and each art can be fully enjoyed only by a *rasika* (one who has a natural bent for it and a cultivated taste as well). This is the reason why Indian music, when expressed in staff notation, retains only the form of Indian music but misses its true glory, its perfume, its soul. It is a great thing that in spite of the abolition of artistic education in schools, the general apathy and indifference in regard to matters of art, and the increasing love of European musical instruments and methods even among the few who interest themselves in matters of art, the blessing of Saraswathi over this dearly loved land of hers continues unabated, and that great genuises and saints and lovers of God who have attained perfect self-expression through the art of music have been born in this land. We in Southern India remember with pride and joy the great names of Tyagayyar and Dixitar whose songs are among the most powerful forces making for unity, faith, and divine love. It is only in art and religion that the scattered atoms of humanity in India have found and will find the compulsive harmony that will make them live a new life and realise their unity and fall into their proper places in a large scheme of national regenerative work and become a new shining cosmos instead of a dead chaos which they are now.

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" When Nature underneath a heap
  Of jarring atoms lay
And could not heave her head,
The tuneful voice was heard from high,
  Arise, ye more than dead !
Then cold and hot and moist and-dry
In order to their stations leap
  And Music's power obey."
    (Dryden's Song for St. Cecilia's Day.)

The various atoms of Indian humanity that are now more than dead have been trodden under foot by many conquering races, and it is only after the British occupation that peace broods over the land like a descended dove. It is only now possible to hoar the compulsive music of art and religion and emerge as a cosmos into the heaven of racial greatness, because for many centuries past the din of battles and the groans of the oppresssd were so loud and ear-piercing and heart-rending that the music of art and religion had no chance of being heard. But even now we have to contend against battle cries of another type if we want to hear the divine melody of art and music in India. The social shibboleths shouted from the housetops by a noisy set of " friends of India" playing at achieving reform and unity through platform eloquence, the disregard of art in schools, and the increasing Europeanisation of our ways and tastes are even worse than the deafening battle-cries of old. Mr. A. H. Fox-strangways says in his excellent book on *Indian Music* :

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" If the rulers of Native States realised what a death-blow they were dealing at their own art by supporting or even allowing a brass band, if the clerk in a Government office understood the indignity he was putting on a song by buying the gramophone which grinds it out to him after his days' labour, if the Mahomedan ' star'-singer knew that the harmonium with which he accompanies himself was ruining his chief asset, his musical ear, and if the girl who learns the pianoforte could see that all the progress she made was as sure a step towards her own denationalisation as if she crossed the black water and never returned—they would pause before they laid such sacrilegious hands on Saraswathi." Captain Day says: " In future years it is hoped. . . . that the study of the national music of the country will occupy, as it should, a foremost place in all Indian schools." Some of us live in that sweet hope—a hope, alas ! that does not seem near fulfilment. The Ganga of musical and artistic genius in the land fed with the life-giving waters of grace coming down from the heaven-kissing altitudes of *Bhakti* has not run dry as yet. Shall we choke it with the dust of modern shibboleths and Western ways, or shall we remove the obstruction of snobbery and vulgarity and indifference and make it flow in a life-giving stream and kiss reverently the white robes of this *Ganga* of the soul come from the heaven of God's love to our lovely land ?

Thus the most powerful element of emotional appeal

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and fascination in Tagore's songs and lyrics consists in its being thoroughly personal and national while having those universal elements of beauty that are the bed-rock of widespread fame and permanence of charm. All genuine art is personal, suggestive, national, creative. Form is its beautiful body and the creative idea is its soul. Art is ethical not by set purpose and intention but because the true, the good, and the beautiful converge from different directions, and meet, and are lost in light. This is the real significance of the oft-quoted and entirely misunderstood saying that there is no morality in Art. It is a most hopeful sign of the times that in spite of the innumerable discouragements and obstacles that daunt the soul and weary the holy feet of Art, India has been given an artist of Tagore's supreme vision and faculty divine. Art in India has now to encounter the apathy born of poverty and ignorance, the vulgarisation and Europeanisation of taste among the rich, the increasing commercialism and preoccupation with politics over the whole universe, the bringing up of generation after generation of students in ignorance of the ideals and methods of Indian art in schools which are systematically mismanaged by men who have themselves been brought up in phenomenal ignorance of the same, the general ignorance of the meaning and value and beauty of Indian symbolism which was the pedestal on which the Goddess of Art stood smiling in our splendid past to

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receive the homage of her worshippers who stood before her presence with pure hearts and folded palms and praying eyes and tuneful throats, and the modern spirit of Puritanism and social experimentation which is a sworn foe of joy while full of inner defilements and is leading us to the verge of the bottomless pit of national perdition. In Tagore's songs and lyrics we see how the highest and best ideals of our art have attained perfect expression in spite of the spirit of the age, and they hold out to us a glad promise of the great future that Indian art is to have in our beloved land.

Sir Rabindra Nath Tagore's songs are many and various. One of them is quoted below.

> "The more they tighten their bands, the more will our bands snap ; the more their eyes redden, the more will our eyes open.
>
> Now it is time for you to work and not to dream sweet dreams; and the more they roar, the quicker and better will our sleepiness be cured."

The following is a translation of Tagore's popular song, "Tumi Kon Kananer Ful, Tumi Kon Gaganer Tara."

> " What a flower thou, in what bower born ?
> Or thou a star, dost some far heaven adorn!
> Yet I've seen thee, aye, I did, somewhere !
> The vision of a dream though it were !
> Meseems thou didst sing to me too,

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Whilst those thine eyes mine did woo :
But the day I cannot guess ;
Alone in my heart's recess
The orbs of those eyes shine !
O speak not, prithee, no :
Only looking at me thy way dost go,
And in this moonlight even flow
Melted thyself in smiles divine.
And' toxicate with slumber,
My soul all sweeten'd over,
As I gaze at the moon yonder,
May from the skies sublime,
Of the stars a pair, like those orbs fair,
Pour in a stream, their serene beam,
On me wond' ring supine."

(Bhavendra Nath Dey's translation.)

I shall quote here one song more.

"O thou, who art the world's delight,
Motherland of our ancestors
Whose lands with solar rays are bright !
Thy feet the blue sea waters lave,
Thy verdant robes the breezes wave,
Thy brow Himalaya mount
Crown'd with its snows of purest white.
The day first dawns within thy skies,
The vedic hymns first here took rise,
Poesy, wisdom, stories, creeds
In thy woodlands first saw the light.
Everlasting is thy renown
Who feed'st the world and feed'st thy own.
The Jumna and the Ganga sweet
Carry thy mercy day and night."

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III. Miscellaneous Poems.

I have already shown in my review of Tagore's chief poems how they are instinct with the very spirit of poesy and show that India's soul is still hers--radiant puissant, unconquered. Well has Blake said: "Nations are destroyed and flourish in proportion as their poetry, painting, and music are destroyed or flourish." It is through the arts that we attain a wider self—the raptures of a higher, fuller, diviner life. Tagore well says that literature is well called *Sahitya*, "because by it men after overflowing the limit of their own absolute necessity widen their heart to be in communion with humanity and universal nature." A poet is not merely a worshipper of beauty, a lover of the true, the beautiful, and the good which form a unity in trinity, and a soul dowered with creative energy ; he is the revealer of the soul of his people. So long as the artist is loyal to the soul of his race, and his motherland, these cannot be utterly lost, and we can well walk with erect heads and elated hearts in expectation of national regeneration in the near future.

Tagore's miscellaneous poems are as beautiful as his major poems and reveal as great qualities as these. Tagore's lyric endowment is at once the cause of his greatness and his limitations. He excels in "short swallow-flights of song"; but there is no great epic or narrative poem by him. The lyric mood is brief, sweet, and passionate; and hence though it can give us

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"infinite riches in a little room," it cannot sustain a poet through a long poetic effort. Tagore's short poems are of wonderful beauty. They are found in many tiny volumes of verse issued by him, and some of them have been translated in the pages of the *Modern Review.* They display the same affluence of mystic emotion, the same plastic power of moulding language into a thing of beauty to become a fit vehicle for the heavenly ideas surging in the poet's heart, and the same vision for the spiritual affinities of things that his bigger volumes of verse reveal. I shall deal here with a few of them.

> "Thou hast come again to me in the burst of a sudden storm
> Filling my sky with the shudder of thy shadowy clouds.
> The sun is hidden, the stars are lost.
> The red line of the road is merged in the midst of the rain ;
> The wail of the wind comes across the water.
> Fitful showers, like ghostly fingers, strike the chords of some unseen harp,
> Waking up the music of the dark,
> Sweeping my heart with a shiver of sounds."

In this we have not merely natural magic but spiritual suggestiveness and charm. The fairy beauty of the world, when rain speeds to the expectant earth through "the blue regions of the air," is brought home to our minds while we seem to hear the thunders of an inner storm and see the landscape of the heart blotted out of sight by descending showers and feel in our souls 'the music of the dark'. Here is another lyrical gem.

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" I know that the flower one day shall blossom crowning my thorns,
And my sorrow shall spread its red rose-leaves opening its heart to the light.
The breeze of the south, for which the sky kept watch for weary days and nights,
Shall suddenly make my heart tremulous and plunder its music and perfume.

Thy love shall bloom in a moment,
My shame shall be no more when the flower is ripe for offering,
And when at the end of the night my friend comes and touches it with his fingers,
It will drop at his feet and spend its petal in joy."

Here we have natural scenery and spiritual suggestion of a different type altogether. The imagery of spring—with its wealth of bloom, its glory of light, its sweet perfume, and its immortal youth beneficent and bright—is brought before us in all its manifold charm while suggesting to us that the blossom of a gladness beyond expression shall crown the thorny plant of life, that a new perfume of love and service and renunciation shall spread from the very heart of sorrow that has learnt the truth of things, that the heart shall become fragrant with the free play of the south wind of joy, that love shall be born in the soul overcoming all selfishness, shyness, and sorrow, and that life will reach its summit of realisation when it touches in an ecstasy of adoration the lotus feet of God. I shall quote here another perfect poem :

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"I know that at the dim end of some day the sun will send its last look upon me to bid me farewell.
The tired wanderer will pipe on his reed the idle tunes by the wayside,
The cattle will graze on the slope of the river's bank,
The children with careless clamour will play in their courtyards, and birds will sing,
But my days will come to their end.
This is my prayer to thee that I may know before I leave
Why the green earth raised her eyes into the light and called me to her arms,
Why the silence of night spoke to me of stars,
And daylight stirred in my life glad ripples,—
This is my prayer to thee.
When the time comes for me to go,
Let all my songs cease upon their one refrain,
And my basket be full with the fruits and flowers of all seasons.
Let me see thy face in the light of this life before it dies
And know that thou hast accepted the garland of beauty that was woven in my heart,
When the time comes for me to go."

What better and higher and holier consummation of life can be imagined than that the soul full of the accumulated wisdom and experience of many ages and births shall understand the meaning of things and feel thrilled by the mystery and wonder of the world, and go into the shrine of the Beloved with a glad and unfaltering heart and lay its garland of pure thoughts and feelings in adoration before God, and live in an

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endless and perfect ecstasy of bliss? The following poem is a fine poem entitled "My Heart is on Fire."

"My heart is on fire with the flame of thy songs.
It spreads and knows no bounds,
It dances swinging its arms in the sky, burning up the dead and the decaying.
The silent stars watch it from across the darkness.
The drunken winds come rushing upon it from all sides.
O, this fire, like a red lotus, spreads its petals in the heart of the night."

Several poems of Tagore have been translated in the excellent chapter on "Poems of Rabindranath Tagore," in Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy's *Art and Swadesi* (published by Messrs. Ganesh & Co., Madras). But many of these have come out in the poet's own English translations in *The Gitanjali*, *The Gardener*, and *The Crescent Moon*. I shall quote below a few other poems.

THE METAPHYSICS OF A POET.

"Let any one who will ponder with eyelids closed,
Whether the Universe be real, or after all an illusion:
I meanwhile sit and gaze with insatiate eyes
On the Universe shining with the light of Reality."

SALVATION.

"Closing my eyes and ears, withdrawing my mind and thought,
Turning my face away from the world,
Shall my little soul alone cross over
This awful sea to gain salvation at last?
Beside me will sail the great ship of the Universe

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The cheerful canoe of voyagers filling the air
With spreading sails gleaming white in the sun—
Her freight of human hearts, how beautiful !
For on and on she will sail
With laughter and tears through alternate darkness and light:
Through infinite space will echo sadly
The sound of their joys and sorrows.
When all the Universe sails away with this cry
What avails it for me to seek salvation alone ?"

This beautiful message of working for the salvation of all is a message that Tagore enforces with the magical utterance of a poet and the moral fervour of a prophet. If we study the message of India through the ages, we realise how except perhaps in the case of the few who are become one with God and are lost in light and love and joy—and perhaps even in their case also—the search for individual salvation without working for the salvation of all has been proclaimed to be futile and unblessed with the fruit of success. Bhagawan Sri Krishna lays this injunction of service of humanity on all and refers to His own gracious self as coming among men not for getting anything unattained by Him but out of the abundance of His love and His yearning to serve Humanity and make it attain the heaven of His Love. We know a beautiful incident in the life of Sri Ramanuja, which shows this yearning for the salvation of all very well. His *Guru* Tirukuttiyur Nambi revealed to him a holy *mantra* under promise of secrecy as it was a *rahasya*. Ramanuja asked his *Guru* what would

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happen if he revealed the *mantra* freely to others and broke the law of secrecy. His *Guru* said that the person who reveals it would die though the persons hearing it would be saved. The heart of Sri Ramanuja yearned for the happiness of all mankind, and he ran to the top of a tower and shouted out the holy *mantra* to the crowded streets below, careless as to his fate if only he could save others from sin and sorrow. We have read in the holy life of Sri Chaitanya (Lord Gouranga), that when Adwaita was asked by Chaitanya to choose a boon he prayed that the nectar of *prema* (love of God) might be distributed to all, irrespective of creed, colour, or caste. When shall this heavenly ecstasy of emotion—emotion that is too keen, heart-filling, and quivering with purity, intensity, and rapture to live in a region of mere fruitless vague desire—redawn in our hearts slaying the darkness of our hearts with its golden arrows of light and waken us to a new and endless day of service of man and love of God ?

Another short poem gives us a beautiful solution of the eternal problem of fate and free will.

The Guide.

" I asked of Destiny : 'Tell me
Who with relentless hand pushes me on ?
Destiny told me to look behind. I turned and beheld
My own self behind pushing forward the self in front."

Here we have a beautiful statement of the law of Karma—a miserably misunderstood Indian Doctrine.

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Our self has by its acts fashioned for us our tendencies and our joys and sorrows. But if we have had an infinite number of past lives, is not an infinity of power within us? What can vanquish infinity except infinity? Karma is not fatalism. We do not believe in any blind overruling force. We do not say:

> "The moving finger writes: and having writ
> Moves on: Nor all your piety nor wit
> Can lure it back to cancel half a line,
> Nor all your tears wash out one word of it."

We believe in *Bhakti* and *Jnana* being able to uplift us from the surrounding mire of low life to the heaven of His love, though such past actions as had begun to fructify in effect will like a discharged arrow expend themselves and bring to us their allotted load of joys and sorrows. But even these joys and sorrows will lose their poignancy of delight or agony to the true lover and knower of God—just as moonlight and darkness, though they are as far as under as earthly joy and earthly sorrow, are alike overthrown and absorbed in the divine radiance of the sun which, like the dominating light of love and knowledge of God, brooks no rival near its throne. It is only when the gracious doctrines of Karma, Dharma, Bhakti, and Jnana are truly understood, that man can live a worthy life and ascend from rapture to rapture till at last he lays his soul at the feet of God and lives for ever in the heaven of His love.

In many of Tagore's poems we find a note of sadness

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which at the same time is not mere sadness, because it is lit by the recognition of the immortal destiny of the soul. His mystical sense of the unity of life and of divine imminence casts a halo over the ceaseless travail of the soul and lights up the eternal mystery of life and death. The following poem on *Death* is exquisite in its beauty, its suggestiveness, and its spiritual truth.

> " O Death, had'st thou been but emptiness,
> In a moment the world would have faded away.
> Thou art Beauty : the world like a child
> Rests on thy bosom for ever and ever."

One recent poem of his, "Unity in Diversity" deserves to be widely read and passionately pondered over.

> " We are all the more one because we are many,
> For we have made ample room for love in the gap where we are sundered.
> Our unlikeness reveals its breadth of beauty radiant with one common life,
> Like mountain peaks in the morning sun."

I shall quote here a poem of Tagore's translated by R. Palit.

> " Fruitless our cry
> Fruitless the rebel longing of our souls !
> The day is dying !
> Darkness holds th'earth and light the sky,
> While noiseless creeps behind
> With downcast eyes
> Weary eve with her mourning sigh.
> I hold thy hands in mine

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My hungry eyes
Look deep into thine
And seek for thee !
Thee ! The real thee !
Thy self ! Thy essence ! Thy sweetness veiled
Behind that mortal frame !
In the dark depth of my eyes,
Quiver the soul's mysterious beams,
As th'infinite mystery of heavenly light
Through star-set darkness tremulous gleams.
Thus, ever I gaze.
A quenchless thirst, like the sandy flood
Of fierce simoon,
Drowns my soul and being,
In thy eyes.
Behind thy smile,
In thy melodious speech,
Or in the calm peace that radiates from thee,
Where shall I find the true, th'immortal thee !
I seek and weep.
In vain ! In vain !
In vain the cry,
The mad presumptious hope !
Not for thee this fullest rapture,
Holy and hidden.
Be thine the spoken word,
The fleeting smile,
And love shadowed in a passing glance ;
Let this suffice
What hast thou ?
Hast Infinite Love ?
Canst meet Life's infinite want ?

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That seekest the whole human being
In perfect completion,
Alone and helpless thou !
Canst thread thy path
Amid the throng of worlds,
Through ignorance and error,
The chequered maze of light and shade,
Or the labyrinth of daily change ?
And lead thy chosen partner,
Thy eternal companion,
Through all eternity ?
Though fearful, tired and weak,
Bent with the weight of thy own soul,
Darest thou seek
The burden of another charge ?
Not food for thy hunger
Is the human soul ;
Nor aught that with greedy clutch
Thou mayst grasp and hold !
Wouldst thou with keen desire
Pluck the Lily in its bloom,
That with tender care
From the subtlest essence
Of Beauty, Time, and Space
God fashioned for his own shrine,
And universal joy.
Be thou content,
That for thee is its sweetest perfume ;
That thou mayst love,
And thy soul bathe itself pure
In that loveliness sublime ;
Nor stretch thy impious covetous hand.

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The breath of calm and gentle peace
Hath stilled all sound in th'evening air.
Cool with tears thy hot desire.
Away ! this cry of hunger cease."

(The *Modern Review*, May 1911).

The poet teaches us in this beautiful poem that the beauty of the soul is the real thing of which the beauty of the body is but a dim reflection ; that the search for it is a holy and difficult task ; that unless we are pure and perfect we cannot realise it ; that beauty is not to be grasped with selfish hands quivering with the desire of physical possession ; that beauty is the sweetest of the flowers created for the adoration of God ; that we must be grateful to God for giving the sunlight of beauty for our souls to bathe in its pure beams and become pure ; that we must make ourselves fit to have the heavenly companionship of beauty ; and that when we slay the lower hunger of the body, the soul will dwell in fulness of joy in the contemplation of beauty.

Another poem translated by Tagore himself and published in the *Modern Review*, November 1913, may be quoted here though it is long. It consists of a number of small poetic gems.

1.

" The axe begged humbly, Oh thou mighty oak,
Lend me only a piece of thy branch—
Just enough to fit me with a handle."
The handle was ready, and there was no more wasting of time.

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The beggar at once commenced business,—and hit hard at the root,
And there was the end of the oak.

2

The favourite damsel said, "Sire, that other wretched Queen of thine
Is unfathomably deep in her cunning greed.
Thou didst graciously assign her a corner of thy cowshed,
It is only to give her chances to have milk from thy cow for nothing.
The king pondered deeply and said: "I suspect thou has hit the real truth
But I know not how to put a stop to this thieving."
The favourite said: "'Tis simple. Let me have the royal cow
And I will take care that none milk her but myself."

3

Said the beggar's wallet, "Come, my brother purse,
Between us two the difference is so very small,
Let us exchange!" The purse snapped short and sharp,
"First let that very small difference cease!."

4

The highest goes hand-in-hand with the lowest.
It is only the commonplace who walks at a distance.

5

The thirsty ass went to the brink of the lake
And came back exclaiming: "Oh how dark is the water!"
The lake smiled and said: "Every ass thinks the water black,
But he who knows better knows that it is white."

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6

Time says, "It is I who create this world."
The clock says, "Then I am thy creator."

7

The flower cries loudly, " Fruit, my fruit,
Where art thou loitering,—Oh how far!"
" Why is such a clamour ?" The fruit says in answer,
" I ever live in your heart taking form."

8

The man says, " I am strong, I do whatever I wish."
" Oh what a shame;" says the woman with a blush.
" Thou art restrained at every step," says the man.
The poet says, " That is why the woman is so beautiful."

9

" All my perfume goes out, I cannot keep it shut."
Thus murmurs the flower, and beckons back its breath.
The breeze whispers gently, "You must ever remember this—
It is not your perfume at all which is not given out to others."

10

The water in the pitcher is bright and transparent ;
But the ocean is dark and deep.
The little truths have words that are clear ;
The great truth is greatly obscure and silent."

11

A little flower blooms in the chink of a garden wall.
She has no name or fame.
The garden worthies disdain to give her a glance.
The sun comes up and greets her, " How is my little beauty?"

12

Love comes smiling with empty hands.
Flattery asks him, " What wealth didst thou win?"

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Love says, "I cannot show it it is in my heart."
Flattery says, " I am practical—what I get I gather in both hands."

13

"Who will take up my work?" asks the setting sun.
None has an answer in the whole silent world.
The earthen lamp says humbly from a corner,
" I will, my lord, as best I can."

14

The arrow thinks to himself " I fly, I am free,
Only the bow is motionless and fixed."
The bow divines his mind and says, " When wilt thou know the truth
That thy freedom is ever dependent on me ?"

15

The moon gives light to the whole creation,
But keeps the dark spot only to herself.

16

" Restless ocean, what endless speech is thine?"
"It is the question eternal," answered the sea.
" What is there in thy stillness, thou ancient line of hills?"
" It is the silence everlasting" came the answer.

17

In the morn the moon is to lose her sovereignty,
Yet there is smile on her face when she says,
" I wait at the edge of the western sea
To greet the rising sun, bow low, and the depart."

18

The word says, " When I notice thee, Oh work,
I am ashamed of my own little emptiness."
The work says, " I feel how utterly poor I am ;
I never can attain the fulness which thou hast."

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19

If you at night shed tears for the lost daylight,
You get not back the sun but miss all the stars instead.

20

I ask my destiny—what power is this
That cruelly drives me onward without rest ?
My destiny says, " Look round !" I turn back and see
It is I myself that is ever pushing me from behind.

21

The ashes whisper, " The fire is our brother."
The smoke curls up and says, " We are twins."
" I have no kinship " the firefly says, "with the flame—
But I know I am more than a brother to him."

22

The night comes stealthily into the forest and loads its branches
With buds and blossoms, then retires with silent steps.
The flowers waken and cry,—" To the morning we owe our all."
And the morn asserts with a noise, " yet it is doubtless true."

23

The night kissed the departing day and whispered,
" I am death, thy mother, fear me not.
I take thee unto me only to give thee a new birth
And make thee eternally fresh."

24

Death if thou wert the void that our fear let us imagine,
In a moment the universe would disappear through the charm.
But thou art the fulfilment eternal,
And the world ever rocks in thy arms like a child.

25

Death threatens, " I will take thy dear ones."
The thief says, " Thy money is mine."

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Fate says, "I'll take as my tribute whatever is thine own."
The detractor says, "I'll rob you of your good name."
The poet says, "But who is there to take my joy from me?"

How shall I unfold the beauty and wisdom of these twenty-five small poems? It will require a volume by itself to do this task worthily. Some of them have been translated by others, and we have only to set these translations side by side with Tagore's own translations to see the instinct for beauty of thought and style which he has in a supreme measure. I despair of doing the work of interpreting the above poems worthily and well and shall give here only a few hints. The fourth poem contains a great and profound truth. It is only arrogant human pride that sets barriers between man and man. But God and god-like men know no such barriers. Mediocrity glories in differences of rank and wealth and power. But to the God-like these do not exist at all. The sixth poem teaches us a great philosophic truth that the idea of time creating the world is as much an illusion as the idea of a clock creating time. The idea of time is purely subjective. Just as one aspect of the self-division of the soul is the universe, so another aspect of such self-division is time. Time is a purely subjective phenomenon. But the soul is infinite and immortal. The seventh poem is full of the most perfect wisdom. What a fruitless clamour is the clamour for fruit? The fruit is in the course of birth inside the flower. If the flower lives its life fully,

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taking its share of sun and rain and sending the joy of perfume with liberal gladness to all, the perfect fruit will surely come through His grace in the fulness of time. How shall I describe the peerless beauty of the eighth poem? Only a poet can describe in perfect prose what the poet has truly said in perfect poetry. The fascination of the eternal feminine consists in its perfect obedience to law, its perfect harmony and attunement in relation to the laws of beauty and grace, its perfect homage to modesty and measure in self-expression, its balance and repose, its readiness to quell the rebellion of the will and crown Purity and Love as the King and Queen of the fair domain of the soul, and its overflowing ambrosial sea of tenderness and emotion and spiritual feeling out of which is born the Lakshmi of heavenly beauty. The ninth poem shows us how genius finds its truest fulfilment in limitless renunciation and service. That which it gives freely and gladly to all is its only true and valuable possession. The eleventh poem shows us how the lowliest of human beings if he is pure and good is loved by God even though his arrogant brother-man despise him. The twelfth poem shows us how the inner affluence of love is superior to the outer affluence of flattery. The fourteenth poem shows us how our wills though they seem free are really dependent on God, that

"Our wills are ours to make them thine."

The twentieth poem shows how it is foolish to be

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thinking over and grieving for a lost past and how such an attitude will not bring back the vanished past but will unfit to us to see the beauty that lies about us and to do our great work in life in the present and for the future. The twenty-second poem shows us that the true kinship is kinship of soul. What is the use of us—the Indians of to-day—claiming kinship with our great forefathers? We are to them what the ashes and the smoke are to the fire. Let us kindle the flame once again till it shall shine bright as gold and illuminate the darkness of the soul up to the very ends of the earth.

I shall refer here to Tagore's great poem on *Ahalya* published in "The Modern Review," January, 1916.

> "Struck with the curse in midwave of your tumultuous passion your life stilled into a stone, clean, cool, and impassive.
>
> You took your sacred bath of dust, plunging deep into the primitive peace of the earth.
>
> You lay down in the dumb immense where faded days drop, like dead flowers with seeds, to sprout again into new dawns.
>
> You felt the thrill of the sun's kiss with the roots of grass and trees that are like infant's fingers clasping at mother's breast.
>
> In the night, when the tired children of dust came back to the dust, their rhythmic breath touched you with the large and placid motherliness of the earth.

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Wild weeds turned round you their bonds of flowering intimacy.
You were lapped by the sea of life whose ripples are the leaves' flutter, bees' flight, grasshoppers' dance, and tremor of moths' wings.
For ages you kept your ear to the ground, counting the footsteps of the unseen comer, at whose touch silence flames into music.
Woman, the sin has stripped you naked, the curse has washed you pure, you have risen into a perfect life.
The dew of that unfathomed night trembles on your eyelids, the mosses of ever-green years cling to your hair.
You have the wonder of new birth and the wonder of old time in your awakening.
You are young as the new-born flowers and old as the hills."

This wonderful poem takes our heart and soul to that passionate lyrical outpouring of *Ahalya's* heart and soul at Rama's holy feet in the Adhyatma Ramayana. There is in it further an indefinable something that makes us realise that Ahalya symbolises our beloved land, whose falling away from the path of purity and righteousness has had disastrous consequences, who though measurelessly old has immortal youth in heir veins and is "young as the new-born flowers and old as the hills," who is "counting the footsteps of the unseen comer, at

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whose touch silence flames into music," who is now rising from her sleep of ages, and who has "the wonder of new-birth and the wonder of old time in her awakening."

I shall quote here a few other precious poems by Tagore:

> "Beloved ! in this joyous garden of ours we shall ever dwell and sing songs in rapturous joy. Here shall our hearts thrill with the mystery of life. Yea, and the days and nights shall pass as visions of the Lord of Love, and we shall dream together in a languor of everlasting delight."

[From Basanta Koomar Roy's article on Rabindranath Tagore in the "Open Court" for July 1913.]

> "But in sweet repose she smiles, for now the tender chords of her heart stir melodiously in the shadow land of dreams."

[The poem on the Pensive Beloved quoted in the above].

> "To thee, my motherland, I dedicate my body ; for thee I consecrate my life; for thee my eyes will weep; and in thy praise my muse will sing."

I shall refer finally to the following poem of Tagore's on *Indian Unity* which is wonderful in its insight into the poet's function in life and its message as to our future duties:

> " When fate at your door is a miser the world becomes blank like a bankrupt ;

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When the smile that o'er brimmed the sweet mouth, fades in a corner of the lips ;
When friends close their hearts to your face, and hours pass in long lonely nights ;
When the time comes to pay your debts, but your debtors are one and all absent ;
Then is the season, my poet, to shut your doors tight with bolts and bars,
And weave only words with words and rhymes with rhymes.
When sudden you wake up one morning to find your fate kind to you again ;
When the dry river-bed of your fortune fills up in unhoped—for showers ;
Friends are lavishly loving and the enemies make truce for the moment ;
Ruddy lips blossom in smile, black eyes pass stolen glances ;
This is the season, my poet, to make a bonfire of of your verses ;
And weave only heart with heart.
And hand with hand."

As Tagore points out the greatest of truths is that of the unity of life and "the knowledge of this is the highest good and the uttermost freedom." In his season of obscurity the poet should not lose his vision but realise it in songs and rhymes. But when he becomes a great force in life and is acclaimed on all sides, the

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full frution of his life is in helping his fellowmen to achieve a higher unity in love of man and love of God.

It is interesting to know that Tagore is now composing new poems (*Gita Mala*) in the Gitanjali strain. They will be the passionate expression of the thoughts and emotions of a highly spiritual soul in the full maturity of its powers and are sure to be a precious human document revealing the elements of beauty and holiness in life and the true and eternal relations of Man, Universe, and God.

I shall close this section with the following exquisite stanza from "The Infinite Love" by Tagore :

"The onrolling flood of the love eternal
Hath at last found its perfect final course
All the joys and sorrows and longings of the heart,
All the memories of the moments of ecstasy,
All the love-lyrics of the poets of all climes and times
Have come from the everywhere
And gathered in one single love at thy feet."

IV. Tagore's Dramas.

Tagore has written many plays but only three of them have been translated into English. His dramas carry on the great dramatic tradition in India and show how the most potent adverse influences are unable to quell the soul of India and disturb the wonderful unity of her life. Indian plays have had as their great traits in the golden age of dramatic composition in India a large, balanced, and sane view of life, a high strain of romanticism, a worthy conception of woman-

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hood, a wonderful fusion of the real and the ideal, a fine power of characterisation, and above all a deep faith in a beneficent Providence and in the divine foundations of life. Little attempt was made at originality of plot, because the infinite storehouse of Puranic stories was near at hand and open to all. The genius of the greatest poets was lavished on delineation of character till the figures of Sita, Sakuntala, Rama, Krishna, and other personages human and divine stand out before our mental gaze like living and breathing men and women whom we have known and loved from our youth. Also the life of human beings is shown as embosomed in the larger and more varied and radiant life of nature, till we begin to realise both man and nature as quivering with a higher and diviner radiance than their own. All these great qualities of classic Indian drama are seen in their fulness of beauty in Tagore's plays.

In Tagore's drama called *Prakritira Pratisodha* (nature's revenge) we have the delineation of a *Sanyasi* (ascetic) who seeks to master all the secrets of life and nature and who learns at the end the supremacy of love over knowledge. In his play entitled *Valmiki-Prativa* (the genius of Valmiki) we see how faithful he is to the great ideals of the Hindu race. The episode of Valmiki's discovery of rhythmic and poetic experssion and the surprise and rapture that it brought to him, of his enlightenment as to the nature and attributes of Sri

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Rama, and of the composition of Ramayana and its musical recitation by Kusa and Lava is one of the most romantic and fascinating stories in the entire range of literature. The play of *Valmiki-Prativa* was acted recently in the Theatre Royal. Lord Carmichael and Lady Carmichael were among the interested spectators. The play is one of the earliest works of Sir Rabindranath Tagore. It is a musical opera composed by him when he was fourteen years of age. It consists of six scenes. Valmiki is described as having been a robber in his younger days—as the chief of a band of freebooters and worshippers of Kali. One day his followers captured a young girl who had lost her way in the wood and took her captive to their chief to be offered as a sacrifice to the goddess. But the girl's beauty and purity and helplessness touched his heart and he set her free. Ever after this he was a changed man. He roamed over the forest in sadness. He tried to shake off his melancholy by joining in a chase with his followers. But the cruel sport jarred upon his new-born sense of pity and compassion and he turned away from it. One day he saw a hunter aiming at two birds sitting on a bough and enjoying the delight of love. A sudden overflowing wave of tenderness overflowed his heart, and his utterance became rhythmic and he gave expression to the first Sanskrit *sloka* (stanza) ever uttered by the lips of man. He was himself astonished at the sweetness of the rhythm and felt as if one had suddenly

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seen Lakshmi rising in her matchless heavenly beauty above the sunlit sapphire glory of the sea. Kalidasa describes this scene thus in his beautiful words:

निपादविद्धाण्डजदर्शनोत्थः श्लोकत्वमापद्यत यस्य शोकः ॥

[Whose pity (*shoka*) born of the sight of the cruel killing of the birds by the hunter became transformed into poesy (*sloka*)].

We know also that another play of Tagore's—*Malini*—was acted in England by some of his Indian admirers and that it was widely appreciated there. I may here mention also his other famous plays—*Chitvargada*, *Visayan*, *Achalayatan*. His short story *Dalia* was dramatized as *The Maharani of Arakan* and produced in the Royal Albert Hall Theatre, London.

I shall make here a brief reference to Tagore's musical play called *Phalguni*. The name and story of the play suggest that death is only rejuvenation and hint also that the second spring of India's greatness will come into shining existence very soon. It was recently staged at Calcutta on 29th January 1916 by the pupils of the Bolpur Brahmacharya Asram. The story is as follows. A king is in great distress of mind on finding that age, the enemy whose forces can never be defeated, has invaded him. He sees his first grey hair and feels that he must give up the world. He asks Shrutibhushan, a great holy man, to help him in his path of renunciation. The duties of his exalted position are left uncared for, and a terrible famine sweeps over the land. Shruthibhusan enables

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him to attain serenity and peace. Then comes the poet, who had been dismissed by the poet in his sorrow at the ravages of age and brings music into the land and work and zest in life. He does so by the play of *Phalguni* consisting of four scenes. The first scene is named Outburst; the second is named Search ; the third is named Doubt ; and the last is named Discovery. Each scene has a musical prelude. The *Dramatis personae* are

A Band of Youths—seekers of the secret life.

Chandrahas :—The favourite of the party who represents the charm of life.

The Leader :—The Life-Impulse.

Dada (Elder Brother) :—The wise man of the party. He checks and controls and is the spirit of prudence.

Baul :—The blind singer, seer of life in its truth, undistracted by eyesight.

A ferryman, a watchman, and others.

Heralds of Spring : Flowers, young leaves and birds represented by boys and girls.

Winter and his party.

In the musical prelude to Scene I we find a description of the joy of nature. The heralds of Spring are abroad ; and there are songs in the rustling bamboo leaves, in birds' nests, and in blossoming branches. The bamboo sings :

> " O south wind, Oh wanderer, push me and rock me,
> Thrill me into the outbreak of new leaves.

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I stand a tiptoe, watching by the way side to be started by your first whisper,
By the music of your footsteps, a flutter of joy running though my leaves, betraying my secret.

The bird sings :

" The sky pours light into my heart, my heart repays the sky in songs.
I felt the south wind with my notes.
Oh blossoming *Palash*, the air is afire with your passion,
You have dyed my songs red with your madness.
Oh Sirish, you have cast your perfume-nets wide in the sky, bringing up my heart into my throat.

The blossoming Champak sings :

" My shadow dances in your waves, everflowing river,
I, the blossoming champak, stand unmoved on the bank with my vigil of flowers.
My movement dwells in the stillness of my depth,
In the delicious birth of new leaves, in floods of flowers,
In unseen urge of life towards the light ;
Its stirring thrills the sky, and the silence of the dawn is moved.

The first scene depicts a band of youths seeking adventure. The words of the wise man of the party are unheeded by them. Then enters their leader, Immortal youth, and they agree to bring the Old Man, Winter captive, for their spring festival. In the musical prelude to Scene II we find Spring's heralds trying to seize Winter.

They sing :

" We are out seeking our playmates, waking them up from every corner before it is morning.

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We call them in bird-songs, beckon them in trembling branches, we spread our enchantment for them in the sky.

You shall never escape us, Oh winter !
You shall find our lamp burning even in the heart of the darkness you seek."

Winter sings :

" Leave me, Oh let me go.
I am ready to sail across the South Sea for the frozen shore.
Your laughter is untimely, my friends, you weave with my farewell tunes your song of the new arrival.

Spring's heralds sing :

" Life's spies are we, lurking in all places.
We have been waiting to rob you of your last savings of dead leaves, scattering them in the south winds.
We shall bind you in flower-chains where Spring keeps his captives,
For we know you carry your jewels hidden in your gray rags."

The band of youths then set forth to find the Old Man. They question the Ferryman about him, but he knows only the way and not the wayfarers. They question the Watchman and he says that his watch is during the night and that passers-by are shadows to him. They learn that the Old Man is seen only from behind and never in front. In the Musical Prelude to Scene III, Winter is being unmasked and his hidden life is about to be disclosed. The Spring's heralds sing :

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" How grave he looks, how laughably old,
How seriously busy with the preparations of Death !
But before he reaches home we will change his dress and his face shall change."

A troup of young things come in and sing :

" We shall smile and leave when our time comes,
For we know that we throw ourselves into the arms of the never-ending."

In the Scene III the young travellers are described as sitting tired with wavering faith in their Leader, who has disappeared from their sight. Then comes Chandrahas, the favourite of the party, with a blind singer to direct him in his pursuit. The singer can see with his soul, not having the distraction of eyesight. Chandrahas makes ready to enter the cave to capture the Old Man. The following is the musical prelude to Scene IV.

Winter is revealed as Spring. He says thus in answer to the queries put to him.

" Do you own defeat at last at the hand of youth?
Yes!
Have you in the end met the Old who ever grows new?
Yes!
Have you come out of the walls that crumble?
Yes!
Do you own defeat at last at the hands of the hidden life?
Yes!
Have you in the end met the Deathless in death!
Yes!

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Is the Dust driven away that steals your City of the Immortal?
Yes!."

Chandrahas then enters the cave and says that the Captive will follow soon. To the astonishment of all the youths, their Leader himself comes out of the cave and the Old Man is nowhere . . . . Then Spring's followers surround him and sing :—

" Long have we waited for you, beloved, watching the road and counting days.
And now April is a flower with joy.
Your come as a soldier boy winning life at death's gate.
Oh the wonder of it !
We listen amazed at the music of your young voice.
Your light mantle is blown in the wind like the odour of spring blossoms.
You have a spray of Malathi flower in your ear.
A fire burns through the veil of your smile,—
Oh the wonder of it !
And who knows where your arrows are with which you smile death!"

The Wise Man comes with his last quatrain, which runs as follows :—

" The sun stands at the gate of the east, his drum of victory sounding in the sky.
The night bows to him with her hands on her heart and says,
'I am blessed, my death is bliss!
The darkness receives his alms of gold, filling his wallet, and departs."

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They all sing :

> "Come and rejoice ! for April is awake,
> Fling yourselves into the flood of being, bursting the bondage of the past.
> April is awake.
> Life's shoreless sea is heaving in the sun before you.
> All the losses are lost, and death is drowned in its waves.
> Plunge into the deep without fear with the gladness of April in your blood."

Thus the play is one of singular beauty and spiritual appeal. The circumstances of its production show how Tagore is as great a patriot and philanthropist as he is a poet and play-wright. It was staged for relieving with the receipts the famine in Bankura. Tagore figured in it as an actor. He acted as the poet and then as the blind beggar. It embodies the highest teachings of Hindu philosophy and religion, but its poetic and musical perfections prevent the teaching from being too obtrusive. The central idea of the play takes our minds to the story in Tennyson's *Gareth and Lynette* where Gareth fights with the Knight of Death who is thus described:

> "High on a night, black horse, in night—black arms,
> With white breast-bone, and barren ribs of Death,
> And crowned with fleshless laughter,—some ten steps—
> In the half-light,—through the dim dawn—advanced
> The monster, and then paused, and spake no word."

When Sir Gareth clove the helmet with his trusty sword, what was seen ?

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" And out from this
Issued the bright face of a blooming boy
Fresh as a flower new-born."

And thus we take leave of the play in a glad though solemn mood, with a clearer vision as to the eternal verities shining through the shows of life and death, and realising the truth of truths proclaimed in a golden verse in the *Gita*.

न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्नायंभूत्वाभविता वामभूयः ।
अजोनित्यः शाश्वतोयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥

[He is never born and never dies. Nor was He ereated at any particular time. Nor shall He born a new. He is birthless and deathless, eternal and immortal, measurelessly old, and yet ever young. He is never slain even though the body be slain.]

V. Tagore's Novels.

I have shown in a previous chapter that the lyrical and poetic element in Tagore's genius is predominant in his short stories and longer novels, and that it gives to his stories and novels a peculiar fascination though it prevents his taking a place the first rank as a novelist of genius. I shall refer here to a few other beautiful novels and stories from his pen.

The story of *Raja and Rani* describes how a Queen viewed the King's friend with disfavour, how owing to her disfavour the friend was neglected by the servants,

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how after hearing him sing and act she viewed with him favour while he went down in the King's favour proportionately, how then the servants neglected him owing to the King's disfavour, and how eventually he was dismissed by the King and had to go away. " Nor was this the only matter of regret to Bepin. He had been bound to the Rajah by the dearest and most sincere ties of attachment. He served him more for affection than for pay. He was fonder of his friend than of the wages he received. Even after deep cogitations, Bepin could not ascertain the cause of the Rajah's sudden estrangement. "'Tis Fate! all is Fate!" Bepin said to himself—and then, silently and unmurmuringly, he heaved a deep sigh, picked up his old guitar, put it up in the case, paid the last two coins in his pocket as a farewell *Bakshish* to Pute and walked out into the wide, wide world where he had not a soul to call his own." There is a considerable element of pathos and wisdom in this short story.

Another short story called " The Supreme Night " is conceived in a high strain. Surabala and the hero of the story were playmates during early youth. He then went away to Calcutta for his education, and full of dreams for the regeneration of India he refused to marry Surabala till his education was over. She was then married to Ram Lochan Ray who afterwards became a Government Pleader. The dreaming hero's father died and the hero had to take up a

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humble schoolmaster's place. Once when he went to Ram Lochan's house Surabala saw him through a window and he saw her. He is overpowered by vain longing and the sense of what might have been. He says : " I used to muse that human society is a tangled web of mistakes ; nobody has the sense to do the right thing at the right time, and when the chance is gone we break our hearts over vain longings." One night when Ram Lochan was away, the tides came rushing on the land. The hero ran towards Surabala's house and met her on " an island three yards in area" while all around went the roaring waters. " The night wore out, the tempest ceased, the flood went down ; without a word spoken, Surabala went back to her house, and I, too, returned to my shed without having uttered a word. . . . . . That one night, out of all the days and nights of my allotted span, has been the supreme glory of my humble existence."

Tagore's *Gora* is a fairly long novel. It has grace and simplicity of style due to consummate art, the fascination due to restraint and measure in expression of feeling, and a large humanity. Gora is born of Irish parents but is brought up in a Bengali family. He was born during the Indian mutiny, but is unaware of his parentage. He and his friend Benoy became passionate champions of the Hindu revival. Benoy comes into contact with a Brahmo called Pares Bhattacharya and his foster-children Sucharita and Satis. Gora's adoptive

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father Krishna Dayal was a friend of Pares Babu, and so Gora also came to know the latter and his family. Benoy falls in love with Lalita, a daughter of Pares, and Gora is attracted by Sucharita. Gora is thrown into gaol for supporting schoolboys in a conflict with the authorities. The Brahmos disapprove of Benoy's proposed marriage with Lalita and excommunicate Pares. Gora finally learns the secret of his birth, and then comes to Pares as a disciple. Both are free from their old shackles and feel that they belong to a freer India. Gora eventually marries Sucharita. Those who have studied well the original say that it is a failure on the whole. Tagore's poetic genius cannot but invest the story with charm, especially in portions where lyric treatment is possible. But there is little or no movement in the story. Mr. K. C. Chatterji, who has written an excellent article on Modern Bengali Fiction in the *Indian Review* for Juy 1914, says: "Rabindra Nath's Bengali style is distinguished for its inimitable humour, literary grace and simple native dignity. His excursions in the field of longer romance have not been equally successful. His only long novel "Gora" is a failure."

VI. Tagore's Essays on Art and Literature.

India is famous not only for its art and poetry, but also for its æsthetics; and some of the greatest poets and artists of India have been among the greatest rhetoricians and art-critics of the world. Tagore carries on this literary tradition, and we find united

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in him vision and imagination and a keen realisation to the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty.

In his essay on *The Real and the Ideal*, he brings out a great truth of art in his own vivid and inimitable manner. He describes the difference between the real and the ideal by first pointing out a great psychological truth. We see objects but the conception of beauty is an inner discernment; the vibrations of ether are transformed into the sensation of light; and outer incidents are transformed into joy and pain in the heart. This mysterious transformation into facts of consciousness is one of the most wonderful things in life at which the really scientific mind has felt puzzled and staggered. Tyndall says: "But the passage from the physics of the brain to the corresponding facts of consciousness is inconceivable as a result of mechanics. . . What, then, is the causal connection between the objective and subjective, between molecular motions and states of consciousness? My answer is: I do not see the connection, nor have I as yet seen anybody who does. It is no explanation to say that the objective and subjective effects are two sides of one and the same phenomenon. Why should the phenomenon have two sides? This is the very core of the difficulty. There are plenty of molecular motions which do not exhibit this twosidedness. Does water think or feel when it runs into frost-ferns upon a window here? If not, why should the molecular motions of the brain be

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yoked to this mysterious companion—consciousness? . . . . . Amidst all our speculative uncertainty, however, there is one practical point as clear as the day; namely, that the brightness and the usefulness of life, as well as its darkness and disaster, depend to a great extent upon our own use or abuse of this miraculous organ (soul). . . . . . I know nothing, and never hope to know anything, of the steps by which the passage from molecular movements to states of consciousness is effected." Du Bois Raymond says: "What conceivable connection subsists between definite movements of definite atoms in my brain on the one hand, and on the other hand such primordial, indefinable, facts as these; I feel pain and pleasure; I experience a sweet taste, or smell a rose, or hear an organ, or see something red. . . It is absolutely and for ever inconceivable that a number of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, and oxygen atoms should be otherwise than indifferent as to their own position and motion, past, present, or future. It is utterly inconceivable how consciousness should result from their joint action." These acute criticisms of the mechanical theory of the universe are the securest basis of idealism, and Tagore is in full agreement with them. On this basis he raises the fair fabric of the positive side of idealism. The music of the waves is beautiful; but the inner music evoked by it is of an even deeper and truer reality and sweetness. "Only one thought seized me then—that

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this music which the great sea had struck in the inner chord of my soul could never be a mere echo of the wail of wind and the murmur of waves that I heard around. . . . It was a distinct music and in sweet order, one by one, the notes of it opened out to me like the petals of a full-blown flower." I have already referred to Tagore's insight into the spiritual aspect and oneness of nature which this passage shows very well. It is his deep meditation and comtemplation that have given him this unique faulty. Mr. Basanta Koomar Roy says: "He would spend hours together watching the mystic flow of the Ganges or seeing the moon kiss the sacred-river into ripples. Here he would spend night after night upon the flat roof of the house, musing on the mystery of the star-lit universe." Tagore had this spirit and this insight even in his childhood. He says: "In the mornings, every now and then, a kind of unspeakable joy, without any cause, used to overflow my heart. . . . . All the beauty, sweetness, and scent of this world, ... all these used to make me feel the presence of a dimly recognised being, assuming so many forms just to keep me company." In later life this joy in beauty was included and transformed in his spiritual rapture, and his love included humanity and nature as two holy manifestations of God. Tagore describes this transformation thus: "A singular glory covered the entire universe for me—bliss and beauty seemed to ripple all over the world. . . . . Then

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nobody and nothing whatsoever remained unwelcome to me. . . Even the coarse forms and features of some of the members of the labouring class, as they passed by on the street, had an inner glory for me." Tagore's view is that the artist must reveal to the world the beauty, the love, the joy, and the holiness that he realises in life more vividly than others by reason of his clearer and keener vision. The artist feels it his duty, his privilege, his glory to express the harmony and beauty discerned within. Tagore says: "We, therefore, see that all that the artist is anxious for, is to express this invisible and inexpressible within, lying in the heart of the visible and the tangible without. . . . . The invisible and inner beauty of the universe is a thing of the heart, and the artist knows it as such. He rends the veil woven by habit and brings out that inner beauty. . . . . He thus proves that no form is ultimate and final in the universe. All forms are symbols. If their passage to the soul be once opened, they remain no longer fixed but become plastic and free." Tagore then reveals to us the idea underlying the Indian view that different *ragas* and *raginis* are associated with different parts of the day and the night and with different seasons. "For instance, *Bhairo* is a *ragini* of the morning. But is it an imitation of the thousand sounds of the new awakened earth that we hear in the morning time? No. The musician who composed it had heard with rapt soul the *inner* music

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of all the various sounds,—and more, of the deep and soundless silence of the morning and then he could say that his '*Bhairo*' was a *ragini* of the morning." Tagore then points out that the effort and emphasis of Western music in trying to express emotions by the "urging and straining of both voice and tune" are a violation of the deepest laws of art. We must learn the highest ideas of Western music as it also is a heavenly self-expression of the soul of man. As Maud MacCarthy says: "Now an exchange of musical ideas does not imply, as some think, a 'cosmopolitan art devoid of character,' because *true* national traits emerge stronger under the stimulus of *true* international communion." She says again: "Hence, the finest Western music, which is as yet unknown to India, is but another of her beautiful wondering children." As has been well said by her: "The arts are nature's beauties as they exist in the subtler human experience." We must, however, retain the great and unique traits of our music. Maud Mac Carthy well says: "Nevertheless, in spite of many untoward circumstances, it cannot die, because its roots are deep in the heart of the people, mingling with every phase of their rich imaginative natures, and with each cherished aspect, personal and familiar, mystic and transcendental, of their archaic but vital religious and social organism." I make bold to quote here two other passages from her essay on *Indian Musical Education* as they show our duty and the duty of our rulers very well.

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She says: "The art of improvisation in *ragas*, with its complex rules and arduous training, its psychic and physical discipline and control, may still be heard in its glory, amongst true Indian surroundings, where it wells up, bird-like but with all the added powers of conscious creation, of human art. This splendid heritage, with its countless mythic and transcendental associations, is a national duty to preserve, and to increase from individual to multisonant perfections. And this can only be done by clinging to immemorial Indian traditions in music." [She adds in a footnote, traditions—not conventions: let all young artists write upon their hearts that tradition is a living, but convention, a dead, thing.] She says again: "I lay this stress upon the advantages which are also to be gained by the Western nations from Indian musical education for Indians, because among the greatest privileges of true education, and tests of its worth, is that which is within the reach of every Indian by birth, if not always by merit —the privilege of teaching, after he has pondered the wisdom of his sacred land." We must learn to revere our professional musicians, and then our reverence will react on their lives so that they will lead lives worthy of their art. If we wait to revere till they lead worthy lives, we may wait for ever. The decadence of India began when art and religion lost their old comradeship and went diverse ways, and when the man of mere wealth or intellect began to despise the man of art

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and forced him down into the hell created by his own irreverence and contempt. Art by itself is a pure and uplifting thing and would purify and uplift the artist but for our superciliousness and the terrible gravitational force of the world of contempt that we in our imagined superiority—thoroughly unjustified by our masked sins draped in the lace garments of hypocrisy—feel for him. If we restore our ancient *Sankirtan* parties and are not ashamed of our love of God but exult and glory in it and in the musical expression of it, Indian art will flourish as before and we shall lead better lives. In a recent speech at Lahore Tagore pleaded for the introduction of music in the curriculum of every Indian University. In modern India people of light and leading are the products of a wrong system that has no place for art in its scheme of education, and this has reacted on art and led to its decadence. Yet what chance is there of this in modern India ? I have been led into these melancholy reflections outside my present scope, because of my deep and passionate love of the Indian ideals of the life of art and the art of life. Tagore has sought to reintroduce beauty into life and life into beauty by the recently started "Bichitra Hall" to which I have referred already. Tagore expresses the very soul of music when he says: "We express sorrow by shedding tears, and joy by laughing, and what can be more natural? But if in the singing of a sorrowful song, the singer imitates weeping

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and in a song of jubilance, laughter, how grossly he insults the goddess of music, the finer sense of music. In fact, the power of music is at its best when the tear trembling in the eye is not allowed to be shed, and the laughter ringing within the heart is not allowed to break out. Then, indeed, through our human tears and laughter, our consciousness stretehes out to the infinite, and in our songs of joys and sorrows, even the trees and the fountains and rivers join their voices and find their deepest expression. Then, indeed we realise the efflux of our soul as the joyous sport of the ocean of the Universal Heart." Tagore shows how even the most imitative of all arts—the histrionic art—has the expression of the inexpressible as its highest crown. Though actors interpret by gesture and voice yet they will achieve their best effects by self-control. Tagore's closing observations deserve being read and re-read and pondered over: "Inasmuch as art restrains 'reality,' it lets in truth, which is greater than 'reality.' The professional artist is a mere witness to 'reality', while the real artist is a witness to truth. We see the productions of the one with our corporeal eyes, and of the other with the deeper eye of contemplation. And to see anything in contemplation requires, first and foremost, that the obsession of the senses be curbed strongly and this declaration be made to all outward forms that they are never ultimate or final, never an end but always means to an end."

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In his essay on *The Stage*, Tagore points out that each art is seen in all her glory only when she is sole mistress. He says: "A sort of artistic pageant may no doubt be got up with a mixture of word and tune and picture, but that would be common or market Art, not of the Royal Variety." The art of drama, though it takes help from acting, scenery, music, and other accessories, does not depend on such aid for its highest appeal. "Like the true wife who wants none other than her husband, the true poem, dramatic or otherwise, wants none other than the understanding mind. We all act to ourselves as we read a play, and the play which cannot be sufficiently interpreted by such invisible acting has never yet gained the laurel for its author." The actor also must assert his individuality and should not become the slave of the scene-painter. He says: "That is why I like the *Jatra* plays of our country. There is not so much of a gulf separating the stage from the audience. The business of interpretation and enjoyment is carried out by both in hearty co-operation, and the spirit of the play, which is the real thing, is showered from player to spectator and from spectator to player in a very carnival of delight. When the flower-girl is gathering her flowers on the empty stage, how would the importation of artificial flowers help the situation? Must not the flowers blossom at her every motion? If not, why need an artist play the flower-girl at all, why not have stocks and stones for

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spectators ?." He well points out : "If the poet who created *Sakuntala* had to think of bringing concrete scenes on his stage, then at the very outset he would have had to stop the chariot from pursuing the flying deer." Tagore then says: "The European wants his truth concrete. . . . . In the Orient, pomp and ceremony, play and rejoicing, are all easy and simple. It is because we serve our feasts on plantain leaves that it becomes possible to attain the real object of a feast—to invite the whole world to a little home ; this true end could never have been gained had the means been too complex and extravagant. . . . . . If the Hindu spectator has not been too far infected with the greed for realism, and the Hindu artist still has any respect for his craft and his skill, the best thing they can do for themselves, is to regain their freedom by making a clean sweep of the costly rubbish that has accumulated round about and is clogging the stage."

In *India's Epic* Tagore tells us that there are two kinds of poetry. One kind expresses the eternal feelings of Humanity through the medium of the poet's personal joys and sorrows and fancies and experiences. The other expresses "the feelings and experiences of an entire country or age and make them the eternal property of Man." In Kalidasa's poems we see his skill and genius. *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, however, seem to be India's own, the poet being hidden by the poem. The whole of India is expressed in them. They

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contain "the eternal history of India." Tagore says: "The history of what has been the object of India's devoted endevour, India's adoration, and India's resolve, is seated on the throne of eternity in the palace of these two vast epics." Rama is the ideal man, and Valmiki has set up in his work the supreme ideal for men. In the Ramayana the tie of moral law and the bond of domestic affection have been lifted to a transcendent height. This shows in what high regard the *grihastha* life has been held in India and how the householder's life "held the whole fabric of society together and developed the true manhood of the people." Tagore says: "The household was the foundation of the Aryan Society of India; and the *Ramayan* is the epic of that household." The Ramayana is our book of ethics, our romance, our scripture. "In the Ramayana's simple *anushtup* rhythm the heart of India has been beating for thousands of years." The world needs both the Western and the Eastern types of art. Tagore well says: "The *Ramayan* is ever showing us a picture of those ancients who thirsted for the nectar of the *Full*, the *Undivided*. If we can preserve our simple reverence and hearty homage for the brotherliness, love of truth, wifely devotion, servant's loyalty depicted in its pages, then the pure breeze of the Great Outer Ocean will make its way through the windows of our factory-home."

I have already referred in a previous chapter to

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Tagore's beautiful essays on *Kalidasa : The Moralist* and *Sakuntala : Its Inner Meaning.* Tagore shows us that it is wrong to regard Kalidasa the poet of mere æsthetic enjoyment ; and that in him, as in Vyasa and Valmiki, we find the shrine of renunciation set as the object of adoration in the very palace of sense-delights. He points out how a European poet would have closed the *Sakuntala* with the agony of the king on recovering the lost ring and the *Kumarasambhava* with the grief and shame of Parvathi "at the failure of her assault on Siva's heart." He deprecates the artistic ideal that turns away from married love and seeks to glorify the cyclonic love that bears away two souls on its tempestuous wings whatever unhappiness they leave behind. Kalidasa describes the morning radiance of love but reserves best resources of his art for the love "stripped of all the external *robes* of beauty and circled with the pure white halo of *goodness*." "He shows Cupid vanguished and burnt to ashes, and in Cupid's place he makes triumphant a power that has no decoration, no helper,—a power thin with austerities, darkened by sorrow." Tagore says again:—"The wild love which forgets every thing except the loved one, succeeds in rousing against itself all the laws of the universe. Therefore, such love speedily becomes intolerable ; it is 'borne down by its opposition to the rest of the world.' . . . Physical charm is not the highest glory or supreme beauty in a woman. . . . . Submission to *spiritual* beauty is

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no defeat, it is a voluntary offering of self." Again he says: "The highest rank among our women is that of the matron. Child-birth is a holy sacrament in our country." I shall quote again a beautiful sentence quoted already in a preceding chapter. "This ancient poet of India refuses to acknowledge passion as the supreme glory of love; he proclaims goodness as the final goal of love." The above passages are all from Tagore's essay on *Kalidasa: The Moralist.* In the essay on *Sakuntala: Its Inner Meaning,* Tagore enforces the same lessons. He says: "In Goethe's words, *Sakuntala* blends together the young year's blossoms and the fruits of its maturity; it combines heaven and earth in one. . . . . Goethe says expressly that *Sakuntala* contains the history of a development,—the development of flower into fruit, of earth into heaven, of matter into spirit." *Sakuntala* elevates "love from the sphere of physical beauty to the eternal heaven of moral beauty." Sakuntala—a fair forest-maiden—had no armour against Cupid. But in spite of her secret marriage and too ready surrender she retains her innate chastity. Later on spiritual self-discipline makes her a perfect woman. "With matchless art Kalidas has placed his heroine on the meeting-point of action and calmness, of Nature and Law, of river and ocean, as it were." "Sakuntala's simplicity is natural, that of Miranda is unnatural. . . . . Sakuntala's simplicity was not girt round by ignorance, as was the case with

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Miranda. . . . . Miranda's simplicity was never subjected to such a fiery ordeal; it never clashed with knowledge of the world." "In this drama Kalidas has extinguished the volcanic fire of tumultuous passion by means of the tears of the penitent heart." Dushyanta is purified by remorse, and hence Sakuntala, equally purified, becomes the queen of his soul instead of being one of the beauties of the harem. . . . . "Truly in *Sakuntala* there is one Paradise lost and another Paradise regained."

VII. Tagore's Essays on History, Politics, and Sociology.

Tagore's mesasge on historical, political, and sociological matters is worthy of our serious study. He is not a regular historian, or politician, or student of sociology. His deepest interests lie elsewhere. But a man endowed with genius, with vision, and with love, living in this scientific and historical age and during times of unrest and transition in India and yearning for the birth of a higher national life in this sacred land, cannot help thinking deeply on matters of vital importance to our national welfare and progress. The views of such a man are entitled to the deepest reverence because his innate purity of vision, his burning love, and his synthetic genius will enable him to realise the deeper movements of the soul of the nation and give us valuable ideas as to the work to be done for the regeneration of our beloved land.

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I have dealt with Tagore's ideas on these matters at some length when dealing with his *Sadhana.* Indeed his central ideas are detailed in the first chapter of that wonderful book. In his essay on *The Philosophy of Indian History*, he points out that the history of dynasties and battles that we learn is not the true history of India and that "we shall fail to see the *true* India if we look at her through this blood-red shifting scene of dreamland." He says: "But to a foreign traveller this storm is the most noticeable affair, everything else is hidden from him by the clouds of dust, because he is not *within* our house but outside it. Hence it is that the histories of India written by foreigners tell us only of this dust, this storm, and not of our *home*." Again he says: "But there was a real India in those days, just as there were foreign countries. For if it were not so, who gave birth to Kabir and Nanak, Chaitanya and Tukaram, amidst all this tumult?" Our boys learn the wrong kind of history. When shall *our* great historian of India arise who shall reveal the soul of India as manifested in her history? Tagore says: "Indian history has concealed the true India. The narrative of our history from the invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni to Lord Curzon's outbursts of imperialistic pride, is only a variegated mist so far as India is concerned. It does not help us to realise our true country, it only veils our gaze. . . . . This history has, as it were, slipped the true holy book of India within a

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volume of the marvellous Arabian Nights Tales. Our boys learn by rote every line of this *Arabian Nights*, but none opens the sacred volume of India's inner history. Later, in the night of cataclysm, when the Mughal Empire was in its death gasp, the vultures assembled from afar in the funeral heath, began their mutual squabble, deception, and intrigue. Can we call *that* the history of India? In the next page we have the British administration regularly divided into periods of five years each, like the squares of a chess-board. Here the true India grows even smaller. Nay, more, the India of this period differs from a chess-board in this that while the ordinary chequers are alternately black and white, on this historical chess-board fully fifteen parts out of sixteen are coloured white. It is as if we were bartering away our food-stuffs for good government, good justice, good education, in some gigantic Whiteaway Laidlaw and Co.'s firm, while all other shops were closed. In this huge administrative workshop everything from justice to commerce may be 'good'; but *our* India occupies only an insignificant corner of its clerical department." Tagore gives us another great and valuable idea: "We must, at the outset, discard the false notion that history must be cast in the same mould in all countries One who has read the life of Rothschild will, on coming to the life of Christ, call for His account books and office diary, and if these are not forthcoming he will turn up his nose and say, "A

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biography forsooth ! of a man who was not worth a penny in the world !" Similarly, most critics, when they fail to get from India's political archives any genealogical tree or despatches of battle, despair of being able to construct India's history, and complain, ' How could a country have a history when it had no politics ?' The present teaching of Indian history is a disgrace to modern culture. Tagore says : " The method in which we are taught from our childhood dissociates us every day from our country, till at last we cherish a feeling of repulsion from her." It is, however, impossible to quell the national spirit. " Like the life that animates our body, this national spirit is a manifest reality and yet inexpressible in terms and concepts. . . . Its marvellous power moulds us secretly, keeps up the continuity between our past and present ;—it is the link that ties us together in a community and prevents us from becoming unconnected atoms." Tagore says that we can realise and define the *Mission of India*. "We see that throughout the ages India's only endeavour has been to establish harmony amidst differences, to incline various roads to the same goal, to make us realise the one in the midst of the many with an undoubting inner conviction ; not to do away with outer differences, and yet to attain to the deeper oneness that underlies all such differences. It is quite natural for India to realise this inner harmony and to try to spread it to the uttermost. This spirit has in all ages made her indifferent to

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political greatness, because the root of such greatness is discord. Unless we keenly feel foreign nations to be absolutely alien to us, we cannot regard extension of empire as the supreme end of our life." Thus Tagore's burning nationalism never soured his love for other nations and races in the world. He believes in universal unity amidst national diversity—diversity, not hatred. He has realised that "above all nations is humanity" and teaches that national variations are necessary for the harmonious development of the universe. This greatest of India's national singers thinks that "as the mission of the rose lies in the unfoldment of the petals which implies distinctness, so the rose of humanity is perfect only when the diverse races and the nations have evolved their perfected distinct characteristics, but all attached to the stem of humanity by the bond of love." In his speech at the banquet given in his honour in England he said: "I have learned that, though our tongues are different and our habits are dissimilar, at the bottom our hearts are one: The monsoon clouds, generated in the banks of the Nile, fertilize the far distant shores of the Ganges; ideas may have to cross from East to Western shores to find a welcome in men's hearts and fulfil their promise. East is east and west is west—God forbid that it should be otherwise—but the twain must meet in amity, peace and mutual understanding; their meeting will be all the more fruitful because of their differences;

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it must lead both to holy wedlock before the common altar of humanity." Tagore then proceeds to point out the great social idea underlying the Indian ordering of society. "The union that European civilisation has sought is based upon conflict, while the union adopted by India is founded on reconciliation. The real element of conflict lying hidden in the political union of a European nation can, no doubt, keep that nation apart from other nations, but it cannot create harmony among its own members. . . . . . It is not the case in Europe that all classes do their respective legitimate functions and thus by their collective efforts maintain the social organisation. On the contrary, they are mutually antagonistic ; every class is always on the alert to prevent others from growing stronger. . . . . Thus the social harmony is destroyed and the State is driven to make law after law to hold together, somehow or other, all these discordant elements of society. Such a result is inevitable, because if you sow conflict you must reap conflict, never mind how luxuriant and many-leaved your plant may look. India has tried to reconcile things that are naturally alien to each other. . . . . . . She set limits to and fenced off all the rival conflicting forces of society and thus made the social organism one and capable of doing its complex functions. . . . . . She has ever been building, out of diverse materials, the foundations of that civilisation of harmony which is the

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highest type of human civilisation. . . . . . . This establishment of harmony and order is manifest not only in our social structure but also in our religious system. The attempt of the *Gita* to perfectly reconcile Knowledge, Faith, and Deed, is peculiarly Indian. The word 'Religion' as used by Europe cannot be translated into any Indian tongue, because the spirit of India opposes any analysis of *Dharma* into its intellectual components. Our *Dharma* is totality,—the totality of our reasoned convictions, our beliefs and our practices, this world and the next, all summed together. India has not split up her *Dharma* by setting apart one side of it for practical and the other for ormamental purposes. . . . . *Dharma* in India is religion for the *whole* of society,—its roots reach deep under ground, but its top touches the heavens; and India has not contemplated the top apart from the root,—she has looked on religion as embracing earth and heaven alike, overspreading the *whole* life of man, like a gigantic banyan tree. Indian history proves this fact that in the civilised world India stands forth as the example of how the many can be harmonised into One. To realise the One in the universe and also in our own inner nature, to set up that One amidst diversity, to discover it by means of knowledge, to establish it by means of action, to perceive it by means of love, and to preach it by means of conduct,—*this* is the work that India has been doing in spite of many obstacles and calamities,

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in ill-success and good fortune alike. When our historical studies will make us realise this eternal *Spirit of India*, then and then only will the severance between our past and our present cease to be." I have quoted the above-said long passages, because of their perfect insight into the very heart of Indian socialand religious ideals and their perfect beauty of style. Tagore, however, seems to have wavered between this view and the view that caste is an evil. In his letter to Mr. Myron H. Phelps of America published in the *Modern Review* for August 1910 and February 1911, he says: "It (the caste system) has largely contributed to the freedom from narrowness and intolerance which distinguishes the Hindu religion and has enabled races with widely different culture and even antagonistic social and religious usages and ideals to settle down peaceably side by side—a phenomenon which cannot fail to astonish Europeans, who, with comparatively less jarring elements, have struggled for ages to establish peace and harmony among themselves. But this very absence of struggle, developing into a ready acquiescence in any position assigned by the social system, has crushed individual manhood, and has accustomed us for centuries not only to submit to every form of domination, but sometimes actually to venerate the power that holds us down. The assignment of the business of Government, almost entirely to the military class, reacted upon the whole social organism by permanently

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excluding the rest of the people from all political co-operation, so that now it is hardly surprising to find the almost entire absence of any feeling of common interest, any sense of national responsibility, in the general consciousness of a people of whom as a whole it has seldom been any part of their pride, their honour, their *dharma*, to take thought or stand up for their country. . . . . The regeneration of the Indian people, to my mind, directly and perhaps solely depends upon the removal of this condition." In a recent article by Tagore on *The Appeal of Christ to India*, published in the January issue of *The Quest* for 1916, he says : "We in India have been led by the spirit of exclusion which is inherent in our society. We have drawn lines as to where we shall eat and where not and have thus erected ring-fences throughout our world. . . . Even against those whom God has sent to distribute food to the world we have enforced the restrictions of caste. Thus we have long entertained such an altitude of ill-will towards Jesus Christ. . . . Who else has glorified man in every way as he has done ?" While as an estimate of Christ's life and work the article is excellent, it errs by overstatement in its condemnation of the caste system. The non-acceptance of Christianity in India is due not to lack of love for Christ but to our religion including and transcending his holy religion. It seems to me that a good deal of misapprehension as to its aims and ideals and

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methods is the cause of attacks on the caste system. The widely-prevalent system of village autonomy and local self-government, the incident in the Ramayana about the king taking his people into his confidence and consulting them as to the choosing of the *yuvaraja*, and the duties of kings and subjects as laid down in the *Niti Sastras*, show that the institution of caste is no hindrance by itself to a healthy political life springing up or flourishing in the Hindu polity. The caste system as it now obtains is as much a foe of religion as it is a foe of light and love and progress. But the caste system as conceived by the master-minds of old never clashed with the expansion of the Hindu race, or its political growth, or its military greatness. We can well learn this fact if we study to any purpose the great and impressive history of Hindu colonisation, or the political institutions of ancient and mediæval India, or the course of military conquest by Raghu and other great heroic chiefs of our race. The ideal of caste was to secure harmony, co-operation, efficiency, and orderly lives by each caste performing its great duties of life in a spirit of detachment and as an act of worship of God. Sir Henry Cotton says: "The system of caste far from being the source of all troubles which can be traced in Hindu society, has rendered most important service in the past, and still continues to sustain order and solidarity." Dr. A. K. Coomaraswami says: "What I do suggest is that the Hindus grasped more firmly

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than others the fundamental meaning and purpose of life and more deliberately than others organised society with a view to the attainment of the fruits of life ; and this organisation was designed not for the advantage of a single class but, to use a modern formula, to take from each according to this capacity and to give to each according to his needs. Even with its imperfections Hindu society as it survives will appear to many to be superior to any form of social organization attained on a large scale anywhere else, and infinitely superior to the social order which we know as modern civilisation." Hindu society was so ordered as to be a garden full of beautiful blossoms of souls—with diverse colour and fragrance yet all fit for worship at the lotus feet of God,—a garden which was the expression of a beautiful and divine plan and scheme of life. There is no doubt whatever that the great features of the true system of caste which is intimately bound up with our religion can be preserved while the great political institutions and ideals of the West are being built into our civilisation, till we shall present to the world a type as beautiful and rare and noble as the great type that existed in the past of India, and in which order and progress, social love and social efficiency, statical and dynamic elements, harmony and energy, peace and power, will be combined till our beloved land becomes the pattern for all other lands and the wonder and glory of the world.

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I shall point out here briefly that Tagore's views on woman's place in society are worthy of our serious consideration. He says in his article on *Woman's Lot in East and West*: "Women are the centripetal force of society. . . . . . I think this destruction of social harmony is the reason why women in Europe are striving for equal rights with men. . . . . . Well, we are quite happy with our household goddesses, and they too have never told us that they are very unhappy. . . . . Europe, your happiness lies outside, our happiness dwells inside the home; how then can we make you realise that we are happy. . . . . With us love is the supreme need." Tagore's abiding reverence for womanhood is as vital an element of his genius as his love of nature and his passion of love for God. He said recently to a gathering of students that after the loss of his mother, he,—being the youngest in the family—was most tenderly looked after by his sisters and other ladies of the household; and that "this gave him ample opportunity of watching and adoring the divine qualities of womanhood—the unfathomable tenderness, the never-tiring patience, and the absolute self-effacement." The following summary of his views that appeared in December 1915 in the *Indian Patriot* speaks for itself: "The poet deprecated the modern tendency which found expression in some extreme movements in the West—concerning woman's rights. Talk as much as you like of woman's equality

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with man,—a woman's nature was constitutionally different from a man's, not merely accidental variations that were doomed to disappear, but there were pronounced differences designed and decreed by Heaven to be handed down everlastingly. In the pursuit of ideals—in the struggle for existence—in the engrossment of work, a man forgets his immediate environment—he is incapable of looking at individuals—he dashes onward. But the infinite patience for going into details—the eager looking after —cannot be denied, that cannot be dispensed with, nay, they are the very pulse and throb of life. Sir Rabindranath thought it was not desirable to have this difference removed and he hoped that the high ideal of a true woman would never be lost sight of." Tagore shows in the article above referred to how the Hindu widow is unlike the European old maid but is a centre of love and happiness—attached to her relations, loving her husband's memory, pure, and pious. Our women receive practical education in the home and are trained to be good, loving, pious, serviceable, and courteous. We must give proper education through the medium of vernaculars and Sanskrit to our women but not so as to make them turn away from the path trodden by Sita and Savitri. If our social agitators will ponder over these wise words of Tagore, all Indians can yet join together and work for the regeneration of true womanhood in our beloved land.

Tagore's essays on "My Interpretation of Indian

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History," which I have referred to already in a previous chapter, contain some of his maturest and most valuable ideas. He points out that "through all the operations of the universe there runs the alternations of inhaling and exhaling, closing and shutting, sleeping and waking;—an eternal rhythmic beat is going on with its alternate swell and cadence, first inwards, then outwards." In the rhythm of human nature, however, there is not the same perfect harmony, though there is a quest for it. The struggles of the Aryans with others led to unity among themselves. Then began, Tagore says, the great enterprise of the fusion of the Aryans and the Non-Aryans. I must, however, point out that Tagore repeats an ordinary mistake when he says that the *brahma-vidya* was peculiarly a Kshatriya science. Many of the seers of the Upanishads were Brahmins, and the Rig Veda itself proclaims the unity of God. Tagore misunderstands the term *Raja-vidya.* It does not mean the lore of the kingly caste but the king of all *vidyas.* Nor is it right to say that "Bhrigu spurning at the bosom of Vishnu" epitomises the history of a conflict between Brahminism and the new religion of love. These are utterly fanciful and baseless theories invented and flaunted before the public gaze to support pet social and historical theories. It is equally absurd to draw any inference from the fact that Vishnu incarnated as Kshatriyas during his avatara as Rama and Krishna. These declared that they reverenced

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the true Brahmins and came to maintain Varnashrama Dharma. Further, it is said that the *Kalki Avatara* is to be in a Brahmin family. It is a wrong method to take up single facts or phrases and then build a big castle of theory upon such a slender foundation. For the sake of supporting such a pet theory or winning a worthless victory in a vain argument, we twist and torture facts and talk learnedly about interpolations and allegorical meanings. Tagore then takes us to the Buddhistic era. "Amidst the Buddhistic flood the Brahman caste alone in Aryan society could keep itself intact, because the Brahmans in all ages had been the guardians of the individuality of the Aryan race. . . . . By that time the Kshatriyas had become almost entirely submerged in the common people." Tagore then shows to us the reassertion and "restoration of our racial individuality and our own institutions and ideals, from out the widespread social dissolution of the Buddhistic age." Tagore then describes Sri Krishna's gracious message as revealed in the *Gita*. He says: "The ultimate truth in all Indian history is the synthesis of knowledge, action, and faith". . . . . The *Gita* shows how every aspect of human activity is completed and perfected when it is joined to the Vast, the Complete, the Universal." He says again: "The characteristics of the Shiva-cult are bareness of ornament and sternness; its peace and passion alike are attuned to the

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spirit of destruction. It represents the monism of the Aryan civilisation, it tends to absorption into One ; it follows the path of negation ; its decoration consists in renunciation, its abode is the charnel-house. The essence of Vaishnavism is the play of love, beauty, and youth ;—it represents the dualism of Aryan civilisation." Tagore then says that the Brahmin reassertion in the post-Buddhistic age was characterised by the assimilation of non-Aryans on a basis of inferior status for them. Here again we are in the region of fanciful theories. We must ever remember the following golden ideas in Tagore's great essay : "India always seeks for the One amidst Many ; her endeavour is to concentrate the diverse and the scattered in One, and not to diffuse herself over Many. . . . Not to fight against the accumulated rubbish of ages, to let matters drift, is to court death. . . . The strength of a race is limited. If we nourish the ignoble, we are bound to starve the noble. . . . Thus placed between two contending forces, we shall mark out the middle path of truth in our national life ; we shall realise that only through the development of racial individuality can we truly attain to universality, and only in the light of the spirit of universality can we perfect individuality ; we shall know of a verity that it is idle mendicancy to discard our own and beg for the foreign, and at the same time we shall feel that it is extreme abjectness of poverty to dwarf ourselves by rejecting the foreign."

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I shall now take up Tagore's article on *The Rise and Fall of Sikh Power.* He points out there that Sivaji began with the clear ideal of a Hindu Empire while the Sikhs began as a religious sect which became a political force owing to Mughal oppression. When the Mughal Empire became weak the Sikhs thirsted after expansion and domination. Tagore well says : "So long as our enemies are strong, the instinct of self-preservation remains intense within us and the sense of a common danger keeps us firmly knit together. When that external pressure is removed, what force is there to keep in check the intoxication of victory ?" He says again : " He who unites men by *force* succeeds in so doing only by weakening others. Nay, worse still, he gains his end only by overpowering and crippling the eternal root principle of true union, namely, *love.*" The success of Ranjit Singh made the Sikhs feel that Might is Right. " The Sikhs flashed through the sky of history with meteoric splendour and then sank down for ever." The following passage is full of the truest wisdom : " In this way men sacrifice their highest good for the sake of a temporary need, of which history records many examples ; and even now this short-sighted greed makes all societies offer human sacrifice, *i.e*, destroy true and full manhood. The blood-thirsty demon to whom we offer such sacrifice assumes different names—such as Society, State, Religion, or some fascinating catchword of the time,—when it plies its task of destruction."

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Tagore teaches us a valuable lesson as to why the efforts of the Sikhs and the Marathas ended in failure. He says: "My answer is,—an idea which wishes to comprehend the whole country cannot achieve success if it is taken up by one great man or a few great men only. . . . . . . India's history has repeatedly shown that forces originate here but are not carried on continuously. . . . . The cause is our mutual separation." Here again Tagore's perception of the evils of caste as they are, leads him to attack the Hindu institution of caste. But we must never forget his warning: "So long as the perception of Oneness does not find scope of work in the religious consciousness of the community, so long as a unifying force, vivified for ever by some noble idea, does not drive the society from all sides, within and without, to the goal of union, even so long can no pressure from outside, no heroism of any individual genius, make such a society firmly knit and instinct with life and sensibility."

We now come to Tagore's essay on *The Impact of Europe on India.* India's peculiar isolation and natural resources enabled her to perfect her social order and devote herself to the task of fathoming the unfathomable. "The human soul is limitless like the material universe. It is sheer scepticism to say that those who had explored that undiscovered inner world did not gain any truth or new bliss." But our seclusion and social peace and spiritual effort were not to be left

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undisturbed. "Just then through some loophole the ever-restless human stream poured into our country and tore up our social order, it mingled the new with our old, doubt with our belief, discontent with our prevailing content, and thereby threw all into confusion." Tagore exposes with inimitable sarcasm our supineness and the restless and often unpurposive energy of the West.

We now come to the great essay on the *Future of India.* I have purposely arranged Tagore's essays in such a way as to present a panoramic view so that we draw great lessons from a great presentation of the whole of our history in its true inwardness. The following message of Tagore is as true as it is noble: "Whatever is best, whatever is fullest, whatever is the *supreme* truth, *that* is for all; and *that* is ever trying to assert itself through every conflict and opposition. In proportion as we try to advance *that* with all our will, in that proportion only will our efforts succeed. The attempt to secure one's own triumph, either as an individual or as a part of a nation, has no abiding influence on the divine order of things. The banner of Grecian conquest, under Alexander's guidance, failed to bring the whole earth under one sceptre. The failure dashd to the ground Grecian ambition, but that ambition has no bearing on the world to-day. The Roman universal empire in the course of its building was split up and scattered over Europe by collision with the Barbarians.

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Rome's ambition was unrealised, but who in the world will mourn the loss to-day? Greece and Rome have loaded the reaped harvest of their achievement in the Golden Boat of Time, but they themselves have not got any seat for ever in that boat, and Time is no loser by this fact, only it has been spared a useless burden. The final purpose of the history that is being built up in India is not that the Hindus or any other race will predominate here. Indian history has no less an object than this,—that here the history of man will attain to a special fulfilment and give an unprecedented form to its perfection, and make that perfection the property of all mankind. If in modelling the image of this perfection, the Hindu, Muslim or Englishman utterly removes all trace of his own existing individual features, he may thereby no doubt destroy his national pride, but neither truth nor goodness will suffer. We are here to build up the *Greater India*." The significance of the advent of the British civilisation into India is thus beautifully described. "Recently the English have come from the West and occupied a chief place in Indian History. This event is not uncalled for nor accidental. India would have been shorn of its fullness if it had missed contact with the West. The lamp of Europe is still burning. We must kindle our old extinguished lamp at that flame and start again on the road of Time. . . . We must fulfil the purpose of our connection with the English. This is our task

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to-day in the building up of *Great India*." Tagore then points out "how the highest intellects of our country in the modern age have spent their lives at the task of reconciling the West to the East." He well says : "In whatever quarter of the globe a great man has removed the barrier to Truth, or taken off the chains of inertia and set free the fettered powers of man, he is truly our own, each of us is truly blessed by him." Tagore makes us realise why Bengali literature has attained supreme heights of achievement in recent times. He says : "That Bengali literature has so rapidly grown is only because it has torn off all those artificial bands which prevented it from uniting with the world's literature." He says further : "Thus we see from every side that the truly great men of modern India, the inspirers of the new age, have such an innate liberality of mental constitution that in their lives neither the East nor the West is opposed and repressed, but both attain to fruition together. Our educated men now-a-days think that the attempt of the various races in India to unite proceeds from a desire to gain political strength. But by so thinking we make what is large subordinate to what is small. The union of all races in India is higher than all other aims, because it is the only means of attaining to the fullness of humanity. . . . . Our efforts at union will succeed only if we look at this movement for union from the religious point of view." Tagore then analyses the new-born national spirit and says :

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"We once went abegging to Europe, foolishly, inertly. . . . A manner of acquisition which is humiliating to us cannot be a suroce of gain to us. From this cause it is that for sometime past we have rebelled against Western education and influence. A new-born self-respect has pushed us back from Europe towards our own country. In obedience to the will of great Time, this necessary self-respect arose in us." He says again: "Good government and good laws alone are not the highest benefits to mankind. Office, court, law, rule,—those things do not constitute man. Man wants *man*, and if he gets that, he is ready to put up with many sorrows and many wants." Tagore then teaches a wholesome lesson to both Englishmen and Indians alike. He says: "We cannot acquire with *ease* whatever is greatest, whatever is best in the English; we must *win* them. . . . . . . Those of us who present themselves at the court of the English with folded palms and lowered head, in search of title, honour, or post, only draw out the Englishman's meaner elements; they corrupt the manner of England's expression of herself in India. . . . So long as we, out of personal or collective ignorance, cannot treat our countrymen properly like men, so long as our landlords regard their tenants as a mere part of their property, so long as the strong in our country will consider it the eternal law to trample on the weak, the higher castes will despise the lower as worse than beasts,—

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even so long we cannot claim gentlemanly treatment from the English as a matter of right, even so long we shall fail to truly waken the English character, even so long will India continue to be defrauded of her due and humiliated." This lesson of sturdy self-respect is enforced very well by Tagore's outspoken and eloquent article on *Indian Students and Western Teachers* published in the April issue of the *Modern Review* for 1916. What will be the golden goal if India is true to herself? "Then in India province will join province, race will join race, knowledge will be linked with knowledge, endeavour with endeavour; then the present chapter of Indian history will end, and she will emerge in the larger history of the world." (Tagore's article on *The Future of India.*)

VIII. Tagore as a Public Speaker.

Those who have heard Tagore's public addresses say that he is an orator of genius. His face and features which are full of distinction and attractiveness contribute to his fascination as an orator. Mr. Basanta Koomar Roy says: "The Hindu poet's flowing hair, his broad, unfurrowed forehead, his bright, black, magnetic eyes, chiselled nose, firm but gentle chin, delicate sensitive hands, his sweet voice, pleasant smile, keen sense of humonr, and his innate refinement, make him a man of rare and charming personality." Tagore's astonishing versatility has enabled him to be great as a

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poet, play-wright, philosopher, prose-writer, philanthrophist, peadagogue, publicist, and patriot ; he is a profound student of history ; he has edited four different magazines, *Sadhana*, *Bangadarsan*, *Bharati*, and *Tattwabodhini* ; and he is a great orator. He owes all these great traits to his deep and passionate love of his motherland and of God. Almost always he speaks before Bengali audiences in his own mother-tongue, though his English style has won the admiration of Englishmen of culture in England. Whenever a lecture by him is announced people assemble by thousands to come into touch with his wonderful personality and hear the words of love and wisdom that fall from his lips. I have already referred to his beautiful religious address collected under the name of *Shantiniketan*. In them we see how his soul is full of love of God and how he has realised that the universe is the manifestation of God's love. He makes us feel vividly and intensely the glory and loveliness of nature and lifts our hearts to the raptures of Divine love. Mr. Yeats says : "When I tried to find anything Western which might compare with the works of Mr. Tagore, I thought of "The Imitation of Christ" by Thomas a Kempis. It is like, yet between the work of the two men there is a whole world of difference. Thomas a Kempis was obsessed by the thought of sin ; he wrote in terrible imagery. " Mr. Tagore has as little thought of sin as a child playing with a top." In a recent address

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on Ananda Mohan Bose, Tagore laid great stress on the profound spirituality of the life of Ananda Mohan Bose and showed that the secret of his greatness of achievement lay in his passion of love and service. He said in a recent presidential address on Raja Ram Mohan Roy: " Ram Mohan came to this lifeless country, like a fountain in the desert, with his message of salvation, his green verdure of life. We would fain shut our doors against him if we could, but he forces his way in. All round us we see our lives fed by the water of his life-stream. Because we are enjoying the fruit we are apt to forget and deny the roots which sucked the nourishing juice and fed it. Ram Mohan came to us with the glad tidings of the freedom of the soul; but we want outward freedom, to be acquired by the knowledge of material science in imitation of the West ; but that is impossible ; until and unless we are free in soul, the centre of all life and power, we can never be free."

IX. Tagore as a Letter-Writer.

Tagore's letters are full of beauty and charm and give us a fascinating revelation of his poetic and saintly personality. They will be a great inner asset when they are published in a collected form. I shall refer here to only one letter that Tagore wrote to our great and self-sacrificing patriot, Mr. Gandhi. He refers there to the struggle in South Africa as the " steep ascent of manhood, not through

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the bloody path of violence but that of dignified patience and heroic self-renunciation." He says further: "The power our fellow countrymen have shown in standing firm for their cause under severest trials, fighting unarmed against fearful odds, has given us a firmer faith in the strength of the God that can defy suffering and defeats at the hands of physical supremacy, that can make its gains of its losses."

I shall quote here finally extracts from a very valuable letter by him to Mr. Frederick Bose, who wrote to Tagore asking what methods were adopted by him to unfold the mental and spiritual faculties of his pupils. Tagore said: "To give spiritual culture to our boys was my principal object in starting my school in Bolpur. Fortunately, in India, we have the model before us in the tradition of our ancient forest schools . . . . Having this ideal of a school in my mind, which should be a home and a temple in one, where teaching should be a part of a worshipful life, I selected this spot away from all distractions of town, hallowed with the memory of a pious life whose days were passed here in communion with God . . The first help that our boys get here on this path is from the cultivation of love of nature and sympathy with all living creatures. Music is of very great assistance to them, the song, being not of the ordinary hymn-type, dry and didactic, but as full of lyric joy as the author could put in them. You can understand how these

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songs affect the boys when you know that singing them is the best enjoyment they choose for themselves in their leisure time, in the evenings when the moon is up, in the rainy days when their classes are closed. Mornings and evenings, fifteen minutes' time is given to them to sit in an open space, composing their minds for worship. We never watch them and ask questions about what they think in those times, but leave it entirely to themselves, to the spirit of the place and the time, and the suggestion of the practice itself. We rely more upon the sub-conscious influence of Nature, of the associations of the place, and the daily life of worship that we live than on any conscious effort to teach them." It is needless to comment upon the greatness and practicality of this ideal and this method. In most of the schools of the ordinary type we have no moral and spiritual education at all ; and in the microscopic minority of schools where the door is partly and tremblingly opened to the rays of divine light as if they were a menace to be counteracted and kept out, we have ponderous lifeless text-books in learned language on incomprehensible themes. Our great Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, said in his address on the occasion of laying the foundation stone of the Hindu University, which, located in the holy city of Benares with its immemorial traditions of learning and godliness, is looked up to by the whole of India as the inaugurator of a new era in our national life : "Indeed the whole Indian idea of

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education is wrapped up in the conception of a group of pupils surrounding their Guru in loving reverence, and not only imbibing the words of wisdom that fall from his lips, but also looking up to him for guidance in religion and morality and moulding their characters in accordance with his precept and example. . . . . The object of an educational system must be to draw out from every man and woman the very best that is in them, so that their talent may be developed to their fullest capacity, not only for their individual fulfilment of themselves, but also for the benefit of the society of which they find themselves members . . . Though something may be done by mental and moral discipline, and something by the precept and example of Professors, these are but shifting sands upon which to build character without the foundation of religious teaching and the steadying influence of a religious atmosphere." When shall we lay these valuable words to heart and see that young India is disciplined in schools of the type of Tagore's school at Bolpur ? Tagore has further insisted on the need for imparting education in the vernaculars. He has stated that he does not find it possible to compose exquisite poems in English directly. He said recently : " We feel that we are not in our own element as our own tongue is not the medium of instruction. In order to uplift the country, education must be spread more liberally and in order to render it more popular, it must be made cheaper and

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easy of attainment. I cannot conceive why the door of higher education should be shut against those who were not so fortunate or opulent as to acquire the English language." Thus he has given to us the great ideals of free and compulsory education, making higher education cheap and widespread, education on national lines, education through the medium of vernaculars, artistic education, and moral and spiritual education, and he has striven all his life to realise these great ideals on which the future greatness of our race depends. The education of youths on the footing of their having a unity of personality and by trying to appeal to intellect, emotion, will, imagination, and soul at the same time is his noble ideal and has been achieved by him at Bolpur. In his recently published brilliant article on *Indian Students and Western Professors*, which adorns the pages of the *Modern Review* for April 1915 he pleads for greater sympathy in dealing with Indian students and makes us realise how the Indian students of to-day have patriotism and self-respect and form a fine type of manhood and must be educated in a spirit of fraternity and love. I have thus referred in conclusion, to this aspect of Tagore's work because it is in my opinion the very greatest of his many and manifold services to our beloved motherland, which is to us the light of our eyes and the idol of our hearts.

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CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Our great and sympathetic Viceroy Lord Hardinge, when he presided at the lecture by the Rev. C. F. Andrews on Tagore, said that the sovereignty of Tagore had already passed far beyond the bounds of Bengal and had reached to Western as well as Eastern shores, that he admired the large humanity of the poet whose affections, interests, and emotions were as large as humanity itself, and that he rejoiced to honour a poet whose sympathies were so deep and wide and whose poetry was so true to nature and profound in spirit. This is an estimate as true as it is felicitous in expression. The poet's dower of vision and imagination and love and sympathy is unique ; and his affluence of genius has a deep spiritual origin. It is in the study and interpretation of a mind like that of Tagore—so rich, so original, so pure, so perfect, so spiritual, and yet so practical—that we realise the truth of Emerson's wise and beautiful words : "Those who are capable of humanity, of justice, of love, of aspiration, stand already on a platform that commands the sciences and arts, speech and poetry, action, and grace. . . . . The heart which abandons itself to the supreme mind finds

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itself related to all its works, and will travel a royal road to particular knowledges and powers. . . . . Genius is religious. It is a larger imbibing of the common heart."

Tagore ! thy land of ancient hallowed fame,—
Our well-beloved mother, thine and mine,—
That, like the Goddess Uma who though born
With heavenly beauty on the snow-clad slopes
Of Himalaya great has blessed this land—
From East to West and North to farthest South
To where the smiling seas dance round the Cape—
With her immortal presence fair and sweet,
Does o'er our myriad forms of life and thought
The light of her eternal radiance shed
Till in that splendour bright they lose their gloom
And shine for e'er and e'er, is proud of thee.
Thou in the silence of thy pure true heart,
Amid the din of tonguesters leading men
They know not where and tramp of battling hosts
That fight and kill and burn they know not why,
Hast heard the ageless music chanted sweet
By India's sages who by Ganga's stream—
That with the flutter of her mantle white
Does speed in joy to give the two-fold gift
Of gold of corn and brighter gold of grace—
Did hear the beating of the heart of things
And saw the beauty of the face of God :
The words that Rama uttered when he bore
His loving sire's behest upon his head
As royal crown far brighter than the crown
That lay neglected at his holy feet,

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And lit the light of truth and virtue pure
Dispersing inner gloom : the heavenly flute
Of Krishna which did kiss his gracious lips
And gazed on Him with seven insatiate eyes :
The sweet *Sankirtans* which Chaitanya sang,
Which flowed from him in an ambrosial flood
Deluging parched-up tracts of soul with *prem* :—
And hence in thy sweet verses full of grace
We hear such mingled harmonies as thrill
Our hearts with joys of golden memories
Beyond expression sweet. Thy song is both.
A recollection and a prophecy.
The fragrance of the coming happy spring
That o'er our well-beloved land shall dawn
With wealth of flowers of love and song and deed
Perfumes thy verse. The yearning for the day
When our sweet land with crown of highest hills
Now sceptreless shall hold love's sceptre bright
And be the Queen of all the world—a thought
Which almost is an intense agony
But for the joy of working for the goal—
Has been thy ruling thought and dearest dream.
The gracious coming of a singer dowered
With gifts of golden speech and song to charm
The souls of men— a holy happening
O'er which the angels keep high holiday—
God grants as rare and radiant royal boon
To righteous races worthy of His grace.
'Tis only next in sweet uplifting power
To His most gracious coming unto earth
To take His birth among the sons of men,
And dower them with His grace.

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O poet-saint !
Thou hast thy wondrous talents used full well.
Thy work is no art-palace decked with flowers
Of speech and fragments fragile fleeting fair
Of song's bright rainbow shining in the cloud
Of fancied grief of love : Nor prison-cell
Where human-powers shut out from light of love
And from the sight of sky of God's sweet grace
And shining flowers of earth's most varied joys—
Are chained and doomed to hopeless toil while Fate
Doth hold the lash with bitter mocking lips :
Nor some vast charnel-house where lie
The mouldering tombs that mark the milion graves
Of human triumphs, inventions, arts, and deeds
That were immortal deemed while over all
The desolating breath of darkness dire
Doth sweep : but is a shining temple built
With love and godward thoughts and service true
To brother-men, wherein we pass beneath
The soaring dome of song that lifts our thoughts
To Heaven, through wondrous portals high and bright
Of Fancy, to the sacred altar fair
Where God has His beloved chosen seat,
With flowers of purest thoughts and acts of love
Around His lotus feet, while dream around
Thought's golden lamps with joy's unwavering flame,
And from the censers of adoring hearts
Love's heavenly fragrance spreads o'er all the world.
I have with gladness read thy " Crescent Moon "
From whose pure orb a shaft of light did come
Within my inner gloom and lit it bright :
Thy " Gardener " that lets us pass in joy

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Within the heavenly bower where sits in light
The maiden of our dreams with loving heart
And bright expectant eyes : *Gitanjali*
That shows how o'er the solemn evening
Of consummated life a holy calm
Doth brood while from the Heaven descend in light
God's angels fair to lead us to His throne.
I sat with thy sweet Amal when he looked
Through life's large window at the world beyond
And when he went to sleep with angel-touch
Upon his brow : I stood—one half of me
As bride's-maid fair and half as bridegroom's friend—
When sweet Sudarshana in chamber dark
Did meet her heart's true king : And then in light
Beneath the shining skies and by the hearth
I saw thy Chitra—house-wife, comrade, queen,
And goddess crowning with her thrilling kiss
And sceptr'ing with her love her Arjuna.
I read thy wondrous tales that show the light
Of love in humblest huts and god-like hearts
In poorest folks : I read thy " Sadhana "—
That ladder leading unto love of God
With golden rungs of action, faith, and thought :
Thy holy songs so full of love of God
And of our land, the Goddess of our hearts,
Have thrilled my inmost being : O poet-saint
The white-robed holy Ganga of thy song
And verse and rhythmic prose has made me pure
And overflowed my heart's most poor domain
That in its aridness unfruitful lay
Till now it smiles with sweet full-blossomed flowers
Of love which with His grace may yet become

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True golden fruitage for my country's joy.
            Accept this homage of my grateful heart,
O poet-saint : God grant thou livest long
To lead our land to lofty heights of love
And thought and service till she shine again
With radiance bright and lead all sister realms
In love unto the lotus feet of God.

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40. Katha Kahini.
41. Kheya.
42. Kshanika.
43. Loka Sahitya.
44. Manasi.
45. Mayar Khela.
46. Mukut.
47. Nadi.
48. Naibedya.
49. Naukadubi.
50. Panchabhuta.
51. Prachin Sahitya.
52. Prajapater Nirbhandha.
53. Prakretir Pretisodh.

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54. Prabhat Sangita.
55. Prayaschitta.
56. Raja.
57. Raja O Rani.
58. Raja Praja.
59. Rajarshi.
60. Sahitya.
61. Samaj.
62. Samalochana.
63. Samuha.
64. Sandhya Sangit.
65. Samskrita Sopan.
66. Santineketan. (14 Volumes).
67. Saradotsab.
68. Saritra Pooja.
69. Sisu.
70. Sonar Tari.
71. Swadesh O Sankalpa.
72. Phalguni [staged at Calcutta in January 1916.]
73. Gitamala [In course of preparation.]
74. Prem.
75. Jouban Svapna.

[Taken partly from Professor N. Mitra's The Indian Literary Year Book for 1915].

I give below a brief description of some of Tagore's works in Bengali :—

Achalayatan:—It is an allegorical problem-play in prose. It has no female characters.

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It describes how a monastery degenerates by shutting out healthy contact with the world and is reformed and purified by overpowering outside influences. It is said to contain various lyrical and musical gems.

Adhunik Sahitya:—Essays on Modern Literature.

Alochana.—Essays on General Topics.

Baikunthar-Katha :—It contains some fine comic and some pathetic situations. It describes how an old man having an exaggerated idea of his own literary productions thrusts them upon unwilling hearers.

Bau-Thaukuranir-Hat:—It is a historical novel treating of certain kings of Bengal during the later Moghul period. It belongs to the poet's early period of literary activity.

Bhakta-Bani:—It is akin to the series known as "Shantiniketan." It contains the lives and teachings of Kabir and other great saints.

Bichitra Prabandha:—A selection of essays.

Bidaya:—Poems.

Bisarjan:—It is a drama in verse. Raghupathi, a priest and an earnest and pious devotee of Kali, wants to offer animal sacrifice to Kali.

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Govinda Manikha, King of Tipperah, is *sincerely* opposed to this and issues a mandate against animal sacrifice. The dialogue between them on sacrifice is said to be a literary masterpiece. Raghupathi conspires to dethrone the king. The priest deprives a poor girl of her only and favourite goat to offer it as a sacrifice. Raghupathi's disciple Jayasinga who loves the girl is incensed at this. The conflict in his soul between his reverence for his Guru and his love for the girl and for her pet is a fine subject for dramatic handling and is very beautifully described. He offers to give his own heart's blood to propitiate Kali rather than allow the goat to be killed.

Byanga Kantuk:—A collection of humorous stories and plays.

Chaitali:—A series of poems.

Chhabi-O-Gan:—Poems.

Chhinna-Patra:—Fragments of his letters. (His son Rotindra Babu is now collecting more of Tagore's letters).

Chitra:—Poems.

Dharma:—Prose works.

Galpa Chariti:—Stories.

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Gan:—songs.

Gitilipi:—Songs.

Goraya Galad:—A comic play.

Ingraji Patha. }
Ingraji Sopan. } An easy original method of teaching English to boys.

Jiwan Smrithi.—Reminiscences.
(Tagore's reminiscences are being translated in the issues of the *Modern Review* from January 1916).

Kahini.—A series of poems illustrating stories from Mahabharata, Jatakas, and Rajput history.

Kalpana.—Poems.

Kanika.—Short Instructive poems.

Kari-O-Komal.—Poems.

Katha.—Poems on historical subjects.

Kheya.—Poems.

Kshanika.—Poems.

Loka Sahitya.—Literature for the masses.

Manasi.—Poems.

Mayar Khela.—An opera dealing with love. It belongs to the poet's early period.

Mukut.—A fine play intended for youngsters.

Nadi.—Poems.

Naibedya.—Poems.

Naukadubi.—It is of the same class as Eyesore.

Panchabhuta.—Personification.

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Prachin Sahitya.—Criticisms on Kalidasa and other poets.

Prajapater Nirbhanda.—A drama.

Prakritir Pratiscdh.—A drama on nature's revenge. The supremacy of love over knowledge is proved.

Prayaschitta.—A dramatic version of "Ban-Thakuranir-Hat" with the addition of exquisite songs.

Raja-O-Rani.—A drama. A Raja neglects his kingdom. The Rani's entreaties slowly bring about a reformation in him.

Raja Praja.—Political Essays.

Rajarshi.—A novel, being a prose version of the play "Bisarjan."

Sahitya.—Essays in Literature.

Samaj.—Social Essays.

Samalcchana.—Criticisms on General Literature.

Saritra Pooja.—Lives of eminent men. The life of Vidyasagar in it is admirable.

Samskrita Sopan.—An easy method of teaching Sanskrit.

Shanti Niketan.—Sermons delivered at the Bolpur Ashram.

Saradotsab.—A drama for the boys of the Ashram. It deals with Sarat-Kal.

Sonar Tari.—Poems.

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[I owe this information to Mr. N. Lakshmanan of Coimbatore, who got it from Mr. Narayan K. Dewal].

II. TAGORE'S WORKS IN ENGLISH.

1. Gitanjali.
2. The Gardener.
3. The Crescent Moon.
4. The King of the Dark Chamber.
5. Post Office.
6. Chitra.
7. Sadhana.
8. Translation of Kabir's Poems by Tagore and Evelyn Underhill.
9. Glimpses of Bengal Life—Translated by Rajani Ranjan Sen.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

10. A poem called " Baisakh." (*Modern Review*, July 1910).
11. A poem called " Fruitless Cry " (*Modern Review*, May 1911).
12. " The Ocean." (*Modern Review*, February 1912).
13. " Three poems," translated by the poet himself, (*Modern Review*, September 1912).
14. Poems translated by the poet himself. (*Modern Review*, November 1913).
15. " My Heart is on Fire "—A poem. (*Modern Review*, January 1915).

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16. "Santineketan :" A poem.

(*Modern Review*, February 1915).

17. "Unity in Diversity :" A poem.

(*Modern Review*, October 1915).

18. Various poems translated in the chapter on Tagore in Dr. A. K. Coomaraswami's *Art and Swadeshi*, (published by Messrs. Ganesh & Co.).

MISCELLANEOUS ESSAYS ON LITERATURE AND ART.

19. Sakuntala : Its Inner Meaning.

(*Modern Review*, February 1914).

20. India's Epic.

(*Modern Review*, March 1912).

21. Kalidas : The Moralist.

(*Modern Review*, October 1913).

22. The Stage.

(*Modern Review*, December 1913).

23. The Real and the Ideal.

(The *Indian Review*, March 1914).

MISCELLANEOUS NOVELS.

24. Raja and Rani.

(*Modern Review*, June 1911).

25. The Supreme Night.

(*Modern Review*, June 1912).

26. Eyesore.

(*Modern Review*, Jan. to Decr. 1914).

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27. Elder Sister.

(*Modern Review*, July 1910).

MISCELLANEOUS ESSAYS ON INDIAN HISTORY, POLITICAL. AND SOCIOLOGY.

28. The Future of India.

(*Modern Review*, March 1911).

29. The Rise and Fall of the Sikh Power.

(*Modern Review*, April 1911).

30. The Impact of European India.

(*Modern Review*, May 1911).

31. My Interpretation of Indian History.

(*Modern Review*, August to September 1913).

32. Woman's Lot in East and West.

(*Modern Review*, June 1912).

33. Tagore's letter to Mr. Myron H. Phelps on Caste. (*Modern Review*, February 1911).

ADDRESSES.

34. Address on Raja Ram Mohan Roy. (The *Indian Messenger*, dated 10th October 1915).

MISCELLANEOUS.

35. Tagore's Introduction to "Songs from the Punjab" by Ratan Devi.

36. Tagore's letter on Bengali Prosody.

37. Tagore's Introduction to Mrs. Biswas's, "The Passing of Spring."

38. Tagore's Translation of "The Poems of Vidyapathi and Chandidas" (under preparation).

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39. Some Songs by Tagore are translated in Mr. Bipinchandrapal's *The New Spirit.*

40. The Relation of the Universe and the Individual. (*Modern Review*, July 1913).

(This is the same as chapter I of Tagore's *Sadhana*).

41. Tagore's letter to Mr. Frederick Rose about spiritual education at Bolpur. [*New India*, dated 11th January 1916].

42. Tagore's letter to J. D. Anderson, on Bengali Prosody.

43. Tagore's Poem "Trumpet."

44. Do do "Peace Hymn."

45. Do do on "Tryst and the Brahmin."

46. Do do on "Indian Unity."

47. Do do on "Ahalya" [*Modern Review*, January 1916].

48. Tagore's appreciation of Sister Nivedita, prefixed to her *Studies from an Eastern Home.*

49. Tagore's Lecture giving reminiscences of his early life. [*Indian Patriot*, December 1915].

50. Tagore's Address on "The Vehicle of Teaching," containing his views as to education through the medium of vernaculars. [*New India*, dated 11th February 1916].

51. Tagore's Address on the occasion of Ram Mohanroy's Anniversary in 1915.

52. Tagore's Address on Ananda Mohan Bose in 1915.

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53. Tagore's Essay on the Philosophy of Indian History.

54. Tagore's "My Reminiscences" [Translated in the *Modern Review*, from January 1916].

55. Tagore's article on "The Appeal of Christ to India," in *The Quest* for January 1916].

56. Tagore's Translations of Two Poems by Devendranath Sen [Published in The *Modern Review* for March 1916.

57. Tagore's Article on "*Indian Students and Western Professors*" in the Modern Review, April 1916].

III. BOOKS AND ARTICLES ON TAGORE.

1. Mr. Rhys' Rabindra Nath Tagore: A Biography. (Published by Messrs. Macmillan & Co., 5 *s.* net).

2. R. C. Dutt's "Literature of Bengal."

3. My Monograph on Tagore.

(Biographies of Eminent Indians Series, published by Messrs. Natesan & Co., Madras, As. 4).

4. Mr. J. D. Anderson's Article on the metre of Tagore's *Gitanjali*. (The *New Reformer*, October 1914).

5. The Chapter on "Poems of Rabindra Nath Tagore" in Dr. A. K. Coomaraswami's *Art and Swadesi*; (published by Messrs. Ganesh & Co., Madras).

6. The chapter dealing with Tagore in Vol. III of Indian Nation-Builders Series, (published by Messrs. Ganesh & Co.)

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7. The article by the Rev. C. F. Andrews on Tagore. (*Modern Review* for July 1913).

8. The Rev. Mr. C. F. Andrews' *The Renaissance in India.*

9. The Rev. Mr. C. F. Andrews' *An Evening with Rabindra.* (*Modern Review*, August 1912).

10. Lord Hardinge's Presidential Remarks on the occasion of the lecture on Tagore by the Rev. C. F. Andrews, (pages 34-35 of the *Modern Review* for July 1913).

11. The Rev. C. F. Andrews' Poem *On Reading the Gitanjali*, (published in the *Modern Review* and in his collected poems).

12. The Rev. Mr. C. F. Andrews' Poem on Tagore, (*Modern Review*, March 1912).

13. Mr. J. Ramsay Macdonald's Article to the *Daily Chronicle* about the school at Bolpur.

14. Article on *The Gitanjali* by the Rev. P. B. Emmet in *The Indian Review* for May 1913.

15. Article on *The Nobel Prize for Rabindranath* in *The Indian Review* for December 1913.

16. Article on *Rabindranath's Conception of Womanhood* by Mr. Chunilal Mukherji. (*The Indian Review*, July 1913).

17. Article on *Modern Bengali Fiction* by Mr. K. C. Chatterji. (*The Indian Review*, July 1914).

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18. A Review of Tagore's *Gora* by Satya V. Mukerjea (*Modern Review*, August 1912).

19. Mrs. Norah Richards' article on *European* Influence on the Indian Stage. (*Modern Review*, January 1914).

20. Article on "Patriotic Songs of Bengal" by Hemendra Prasad Ghose in the *Indian Review* for September 1907.

21. The chapter on "Sadhana" in Pandit Sita Nath Tattwabhushan's *History of Brahmoism*.

22. John Alden Carpenter's Book of Songs setting to music selections from *Gitanjali*, (published by Mr. G. Schirmer).

23. Four Songs from *Gitanjali* set to music by Professor Landon Ronald. (Messrs. Macmillan & Co.).

24. The portion in the Bengal Administration Report for dealing with Tagore as a landlord.

25. Mr. Ajitkumar Chakravarthi's article on "Shantiniketan." (*Modern Review*, 1914).

26. Mr. Seshadri's Articles in *The Hindu* for 1914-1915 on *The Crescent Moon*, *The King of the Dark Chamber*, and *The Post Office*.

27. My Articles on Tagore

(1) Rabindranath Tagore : An Appreciation : *The Hindu*, dated 1st November 1913.

(2) The Spiritual Beauty of Tagore's The King of the Dark Chamber. (*Vedanta Kesari*, November 1914).

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(3) Tagore's The Post Office.
(*Vedanta Kesari*, November 1915).

(4) Tagore's Chitra : A Study and an Appreciation.
(*The Madras Fortnightly*, March 1915).

(5) Tagore's The Crescent Moon.
(*The Modern World*, March 1915).

(6) Tagore's Translation of Kabir's poems.
(*The Literary Journal*, August 1915).

(7) Kabir and Tagore.
(*The Madras Fortnightly*, August 1915).

(8) Tagore's Sadhana: [*Vedanta Kasari*, January 1916.]

(9) Tagore's Gitanjali : [*Vedanta Kesari*, March 1916.]

28. J. C. Rollo's *Chitra*: [*Indian Reviwe* for 1914, pages 609, 610].

29. Professor T. Hirose of Keio University, Tokio on Tagore. [Journal of the Indo-Japanese Association for August 1915, quoted in the *Modern Review*, January 1916].

30. Tagore's Limitations. [From the Vernacular paper *Hindustan* quoted in the *Indian Review*, November 1915, page 977].

31. Sir Narayan Chandavarkar's Lectures on Tagore in 1915.

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32. A letter by "An Educational Pilgrim" to the Leader: [Quoted at pages 157 to 160 of the *Dharma Prachar*, Mysore].

33. Mr. Basanta Koomar Roy's article on Rabindra nath Tagore in the *Open Court*, July 1913.

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22	26	East	West.
33	23	developmeut	development.
36	16	lovely	lonely
36	17	lovely	lonely
40	26	javan	jivan.
44	26	know	knew
45	3	Naivedya Sishu	Nawedya, Sishu
47	23	stated.	stated :
50	19	soared	soured
53	28	it	them
54	27	Banjuya	Bangiya
56	8	Yeat's	Yeats'
56	13	care	cares
56	14	pleasure	pleasures
60	3	Heramalahi	Her Amalaki
64	23	लु	स्तु
76	8	स मुद्यते	समुद्यते
90	11	spirits	spirit
90	28	in service	in the service
93	1	Hence utter	On hence utter
98	11	soul	soul,
98	16	,	,—
98	18	.	omit
100	18	any by	by any
101	8	potriotism	patriotism
101	24	every	many
102	10	above said	abovesaid

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106	18	letter,	letter
116	23	consonants,	consonants
117	28	per fect	perfect
120	26	word,	word
124	25	margins	margins,
136	9	thousand	a thousand
151	5	goal.	goal,
165	28	beauty	beauty,
169	8	who	save
171	26	beautiful,	beautiful
171	28	genins	genius
176	14	fervour of the	the fervour of
179	17	ancient India	ancient India,
180	6	need for love	need for the love
193	21	above said	abovesaid
200	9	shrink not to	shrink to
236	24	, soars	, and soars
240	19	opposite	apposite
245	1	child	child ;
270	7	selflesness	selflessness
276	14	and	omit
288	25	upon	upon the
289	22	grandmother	grandfather
309	17	the twhole	the whole
315	10	benign aspect)	benign) aspect
368	10	still player	still the player
381	20	;	omit
381	20	loves	loves ;
394	5	harem f	harem of
394	19	cross	crossed.
421	21	आनन्दे न	आनन्देन
432	14	hoar	hear

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469	9	वामभूय:	वानंभूय:
484	11	that	which
484	12	and seeks	and which seeks
524	17	1915	1916
524	22	referred	referred,
526	6	well-beloved	well-belove'd

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